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ABSTRACT

This guide is the third of four intended to help persons involved in planning new schools, new programs, or other comprehensive change projects. The materials consist of readings to be done individually and exercises to be done individually and/or with a group. Guide 3 looks at the political side of planning new schools by examining the interface between the new school planners/implementers and their environment (district, community) and then offers a number of strategies and tactics for dealing effectively with that environment. (Author/MLF)

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MAPPING NEW SCHOOLS

3: MAPPING YOUR SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENT

EA 011 514

part 3 in a series of four
new-school planning guides

MAPPING
NEW
SCHOOLS

3: MAPPING YOUR SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENT

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Center for Policy Research
New York City

This volume is a portion of the Final Report, Grant NIE-G-74-0051, "Designing and Starting Innovative Schools: A Field Study of Social Architecture in Education," Matthew B. Miles, Principal Investigator. The Final Report contains the following parts:

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary
New Schools as a Strategy for Educational Improvement
Planning and Implementing New Schools: A General Framework

PART II: RESEARCH METHODS

Project Overview
Research Methods
  Appendices

PART III: CASE STUDIES

Westgate Schools: A Case Study of Two Open-space Elementary Schools
Change and Conflict: Educational Innovation in Community Context
Innovation in Lakeport
  College High School: A Planning Case Study
  The Founding of Julius Appelbaum High School
Arts Coop: An Experimental High School Program

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS

Reflections on the Case Studies
Implications and Advice

PART V: MAPPING NEW SCHOOLS--A SERIES OF FOUR NEW-SCHOOL PLANNING GUIDES

Guide 1: Setting the Stage for Planning
Guide 2: Designing Your School
Guide 3: Mapping Your School's Environment
Guide 4: Making Your School Work

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Exercises v
Acknowledgments vii
Foreword ix
About These Guides xiii

INTRODUCTION: ON BEING A MAP MAKER 1

Purpose of mapping 4
Problems of mapping 5
Mapping -- and using the map 7
Morality of mapping and political action . . . 8

1: SURVEY YOUR ENVIRONMENT 11

What's involved in defining environment? 14

Distinguishing the inside from the outside . . 14
Different ways of looking at environments . . 15
Recognizing the multi-power system 15

How can we broaden our information base? 19

The district offices 19
The community environment 20
Supports and constraints 25

What about identifying key stakeholders? 31

Who are the key stakeholders? 31
What can key stakeholders do for you? 35
How can you gain access to key stakeholders? . 36
Maintain self-awareness when dealing with stakeholders 39

2: BUILD GROUP STRENGTHS 41

How can we mobilize group energy? 45

Investment in the project 45
Group cohesiveness 45
Goal-focused behavior 46
Problem-solving approach 47

How can we improve group functioning? 51

Assessing group strengths 51
Improving group strengths 61

What about presenting a united front? 69

MORE...

3: MANAGE YOUR CONTACTS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT 73

Vulnerability of the new school 75

How visible should the new school be? 78

Advantages of low visibility 79
Advantages of high visibility 80

What are the issues of environmental contact and avoidance? 81

The move toward environmental contact 82
The move toward environmental avoidance . . . 83
Management of environmental contact 85

4: PLAN STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT 89

Objectives of dealing with the environment . . 91
Two stances in relation to the environment . . 95

What are some effective strategies and tactics to use with the environment? 97

Cooptation strategy 98
Bargaining strategy 102
Circumvention strategy 105
Buffering strategy 109

How necessary is the use of tactics? 119

CONCLUSION: THE MAPPING CYCLE 123

RESOURCES R-1

Small groups and meetings R-3
Organizations R-4
Organizational design R-5
Organizational development R-6
Networks R-8
The community R-9
Planning R-9
Implementation R-11
Inservice education R-12
Alternative staffing R-12
Organizing for instruction R-14
Multi-cultural education R-16

EXERCISES

1: DEFINE YOUR ENVIRONMENT 17
Identifying helps and hindrances in environment

2: EXCHANGE RATES 23
Focusing on exchanges with stakeholders

3: LIST THE GOOD AND THE BAD 29
Listing supports and constraints in environment

4: RE-ASSESS KEY STAKEHOLDERS 33
Identifying key stakeholder categories and people in them

5: SEE CONNECTIONS 37
Listing contact people, their interests, and your connection to them

6: WHAT WENT WRONG? 49
Problem-solving a planning group's situation

7: QUESTIONING 53
Diagnosing your group's effectiveness

8: QUESTION-AIRING 57
Interpreting responses to QUESTIONING diagnosis

9: GROUP IMPROVEMENT PLAN 67
Improving your group's effectiveness

10. MEETING CONDUCT 71
Preparing for a meeting with stakeholders

11: WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...? 87
Dealing with environmental contact/avoidance problems

12: WHAT'LL THEY THINK OF NEXT? 113
Thinking through strategies and tactics for use with the environment

13: BE A HIRED HAND 121
Identifying and addressing group problems

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FOREWORD

This foreword is not, like most forewords, a blessing, an overture to a musical, or an advertising blurb. Instead, it's a reflection on the basic problem for which these guides are a solution, and some history of how they were produced.

There are many paths to school improvement. All of them work to some extent, and all of them fall far short of their users' hopes. In the early 1960's there was much emphasis on the adoption of specific educational innovations, from PSSC physics to team teaching (Miles, 1964). Much energy has been spent for decades on role-shaping strategies, including pre-service and in-service training (Rubin, 1971). The planned change language of the later 1960's and early 1970's favored "self-renewal and organization development, a strategy based on the idea that educational systems as a whole need to become healthier, with stronger problem-solving capacities.

All of these strategies proved less than effective. New curriculum content somehow did little to change the basic conditions of life and learning in schools; pre-service work was disconnected from the realities of schools and in-service training was feeble; organization development has diffused very slowly (Miles, Fullan and Taylor, 1978).

Another strategy which began to see heavy use in the late 60's was the creation of complete new schools, an approach which let innovators "start from scratch" to build productive educational environments, supposedly freed of the constraints of the established system. Alternative schools flowered; educational "options" became popular; there were hopes for voucher plans; new physical plant was still frequently being built.

It may come as a surprise to many readers that the new-school strategy is still very much in active use in the late 70's. Examples:

- Exactly because of enrollment decline, many school districts are exploring innovative program uses for underused physical plant.
- A recent estimate (Bass, 1978) is that 25 percent of American school districts have created "alternative" programs to enable a wider range of choice.
- Private schools, not including parochial schools, have experienced a 51 percent increase in enrollment since 1971 (Cooper, 1977); new private schools are not rare.
- The National Alternative Schools Program (Flaxman and Homstead, 1978) identified over 1,300 specific alternative schools and programs (both elementary and secondary) sited in public school districts.

- New public schools are being vigorously built in areas where population is expanding, notably the Sunbelt.

- Much physical plant built in the last three decades is badly in need of modernization: where renovated or new facilities are being created, the opportunity to create new programs is present.

- Open-space plans are both economical and philosophically attractive, and have become increasingly popular. But the flexibility and team planning they permit usually mean that a substantially new type of school is being created.

So, new schools, usually with innovative or alternative-like intentions, are much more pervasive than one might expect.*

But the new-school strategy, though it is attractive in its simplicity (start from scratch, make it new, escape the constraints of the old) has many pitfalls. Many new schools rapidly become rigidified, and slip toward carbon copies of the old ones they were supposed to be "alternatives" to. Others lack a coherent overall vision; their disjointed parts add up to little that is new. Even where a clear and innovative vision exists, there are many slips between the ideal and the real (Gross et al, 1971; Smith and Keith, 1971). Staffs of new schools run into unanticipated conflicts among themselves, or find that the district's bureaucratic procedures, or the parents' skeptical opposition, are creating severe problems. Often the original hopes for the school are drastically revised or even abandoned, and loss of staff and dollar resources occurs. Though the new-school strategy can be strikingly successful, it is by no means easy or simple to bring off.

The educational literature of the past two decades contains very little solid knowledge about the problems of planning and implementing new schools. And there is almost no practical help available for the many school districts where the strategy is in use. Even the better textbooks on school planning (for example, Castaldi, 1977) spend most of their pages on the efforts needed to plan the physical facility -- and very little on what it takes to develop a program and a working social system for the new school. Matters such as governance, communication mechanisms, school climate, and problem-solving methods are either taken for granted or left to "emerge." But the social system of the new school needs "architects" just as much as the physical building does. It too must be designed and built. In a real sense, the "social architecture" determines, far more than the physical setting, just what life in the new school will be like.

---

* Note that the first pronouncement of Ernest Boyer, when he was appointed U.S. Commissioner of Education in 1977, stressed flexibility, variety, and the development of alternative approaches:

> There is an urgent need for more variety in our approaches to the upper grades. The school is the only institution in America where we take the entire population and assume that everyone will perform in the same way for an extended period of time.

These needs for better knowledge and practice in the new-schools domain led us in 1974 to develop the Project on Social Architecture in Education, a four-year effort supported by the National Institute of Education, and by Teacher Corps.

The Project began with intensive interviews with school planners and consultants to retrieve the "state of the art," then moved to intensive study of six new innovative public schools for a two-and-a-half year period. Through detailed documentation of planning -- and actual implementation -- along with interview and questionnaire data, we studied such questions as:

- What processes are involved along the way from initial vision, design, staffing, start-up, and development into a stable system?
- To what degree do these schools achieve their innovative intent?
- What accounts for their success -- or lack of it? What linkages can be traced between early planning and the later implementation process?
- How can the planning and implementation process best be facilitated and aided?

We began to understand more clearly such matters as the importance of a coherent "plan for planning"; how people go about the actual design of the new school; what the political issues in district and community look like; and what it takes to bring the vision of a new school into functioning reality.

From the beginning of the project, we were committed to active dissemination of our findings. We knew that our detailed case studies, or a technical research report, would probably not be of much help to those creating new schools. Special learning materials would be needed.

During the second year of the project, we hired a materials development specialist, Dr. Beverly Loy Taylor. She worked in parallel with the research team, reading their field reports and drafts of case studies, and isolating the key issues around which learning materials should be built. Her persistent questioning was a strong support for clearer conceptualization of these issues, and a work conference she and the research team staged on experimental designs for learning materials was very fruitful. Over the next months, she created materials with a direct and practical "user" orientation. Beverly's work was a strong and lively alternative to the usual "dissemination" strategy of sending out a research report to a largely uninterested audience. And the need to make sense and be helpful to the creators of new schools aided the research effort substantially as it proceeded.

These four guides are the result. They have already gone through two revisions after staff and field feedback, and we think they will be useful to anyone who is contemplating, or is actually in the process of, creating a new school program.

The materials do not require that a new building be the setting. They can be helpful to anyone whose mission is to create a whole, new program, such as an alternative, an "option," a newly opened building, or a radically redesigned school setting. The problems of creating whole programs are, we think, different in important respects from changing a part, such as a textbook, a schedule, or a new course. These guides are thus designed for comprehensive change projects -- especially those which have a new, innovative thrust, and where past practice cannot be easily relied on.

I cannot resist the impulse to mention the energy, creativity and care which Beverly has brought to this project. Our work over the past three years has been a strong and satisfying colleagueship; that is perhaps expectable, but in any case is a very pleasing bonus beyond the pleasure I feel in seeing these guides. I predict they will be extremely useful to those who are faced with the joys and pains of creating new schools.

--Matthew B. Miles

New York City
December 1978

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ABOUT THESE GUIDES

These guides are intended to help people who are planning or implementing new schools. Undertaking such a project requires a rather specialized set of concepts and skills, which are usually outside of the normal experience of most educators and administrators, who are more accustomed to performance and practice than to planning as such.

We should say at the outset that these materials are not aimed at the specific, substantive tasks of new schools, such as selecting curriculum or designing a needs assessment. Rather, these guides focus on the planning process itself and deal with such questions as: What is good planning? Who should be involved? What skills do planners need? How can needed support be obtained to make the plans effective? We call these questions of "meta-planning," or ways of thinking about and organizing the planning process. They are a plan for planning. Meta-planning, we recognize, is an impossible jargon term, but it nevertheless conveys the notion of an overall plan for planning, an approach to the task of planning. Thus, a good meta-plan will greatly facilitate the plans for specific, substantive tasks, such as designing a needs assessment.

It is usually the case that planning and implementing a new school take considerable time, sometimes several years. The tasks usually associated with such an effort include:

- Determining goals for the school
- Developing a vision or rough sketch of what the school will be like
- Designing its organizational structure and "peopling" that structure
- Ensuring a continual supply of adequate financial resources and environmental support to keep the school going
- Using knowledge and expertise to improve the school
- Linking the plans to the implementation of the school
- Mapping strategies for troubleshooting and renewing the school after it begins operation

The broad range of these tasks and the enormous amount of time required to complete them point to the need for an overall strategy. A plan for planning will take account of all of these tasks and provide continuity through time and the inevitable shifting of the planning/implementation group members.

These materials are designed to acquaint you with these tasks and to help you plan an overall, broad-brush strategy for accomplishing them.

Hence, GUIDE 1: SETTING THE STAGE FOR PLANNING, helps orient the reader to the planning enterprise: after dealing with such issues as the composition of the planning group and planning skills, it sets out the primary meta-planning tasks for a new school.

GUIDE 2: DESIGNING YOUR SCHOOL then examines means by which to clarify goals and methods of designing social systems before it focuses on the particular issues of new-school design.

GUIDE 3: MAPPING YOUR SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENT looks at the political side of planning new schools by examining the interface between the new-school planners/implementers and their environment (district, community) and then offers a number of strategies and tactics for dealing effectively with that environment.

Finally, GUIDE 4: MAKING YOUR SCHOOL WORK, focuses on the linkage between the plan and the actual implementation of the new school, on means for staffing the new school, and on troubleshooting and renewing the new school after start-up.

For all of these guides, new-school planners and implementers have provided the context, and wherever possible, our points are illustrated with concrete examples drawn from the experiences of actual new-school planners and implementers.

It would be wonderful to be able to provide every new-school planner or implementer with a detailed, step-by-step program of action: the answers on exactly what, when, and how to do it.

Such answers do not exist. No two situations are so alike as to invite close comparison and a recipe for action. What does exist are some general approaches and strategies that have been used more or less successfully by other planners and implementers. We hope they serve you well.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

These materials are based on in-depth studies of six new-school planning efforts and they draw heavily upon that case data as well as from other experiences and work of staff members, consultants, writers and researchers.

The guides consist of readings to be done individually and exercises to be done individually and/or with a group. These exercises are open-ended and self-analyzing, rather than prescriptive with fixed answers. Since there is considerable reading as well as a number of exercises that call for writing in the guide, it is recommended that each member of the planning group have his or her own copy.

The materials can be used on your own, if you wish, without a consultant's help. The following features facilitate easy use of the guides:

- MODULARISM

  The materials in each guide are divided into separate modules that may be used independently of one another. While there is a natural flow from one section to the next, it is not necessary to begin at the front and go all of the way through to the end. Instead, we hope that the user will pick those sections that are most appropriate or relevant to the situation at hand and turn directly to them as needed.

The first page of each module lists at the top those questions dealt with in that module. Then, the sections of the module repeat those questions as headings for the topics being developed. The user would do well to read those questions first and then skim the sections that follow. This will permit a decision on whether a particular module is an important area to be used.

Once a decision has been made to use a module, we recommend that you do the reading before meeting with your group so that you will have a basis for discussion and for completing group exercises. Write notes to yourself in the margins or on the blank pages to spur your memory when you meet with your group.

Note that while the material is divided into modules by subject, we have not hesitated to introduce and discuss in one section issues or ideas that are treated more fully in another. The user will always be referred to other sections that deal with a similar topic, but we have allowed a limited amount of repetition for the sake of continuity within sections. That is to say, we have assumed it would be more convenient for each section to be usable relatively independently of the others, without the need for the user having constantly to skip to other sections or guides to pick up relevant points.

• EXERCISES

The exercises in these guides are activities designed to provide users with some practical task to do that is related to the preceding discussion. The exercises are printed on colored pages so that they can be easily found and, in addition, are marked with a "DO" symbol to indicate that something is to be done rather than simply read. The activities are also accompanied by an estimate of the time needed for their completion, which appears in parentheses on the right side of the page. These time estimates are loose and will vary according to individual characteristics of the users.

These exercises can be done by an individual, by two or three people working together, or by a small- to medium-sized group.

Many exercises are accompanied by the suggestion that one's responses be compared and discussed with others in the group. Such discussion offers an expansion of the value of the activity; it is not absolutely necessary in most cases for an individual using the materials to seek out others for this purpose.

When a group does use the materials, we suggest that a facilitator be appointed to keep things moving along. This function could be fulfilled by one person throughout or by a rotation among your members.

Exercises are announced and their intent is explained on the pages preceding them.

Finally, we have tried to leave some blank pages here and there throughout the guides to encourage their use as workbooks. We hope that you will write freely on the blank pages, in the spaces provided in some of the exercises, and in the margins of the text. Plenty of ideas will occur to you as you use these materials. We hope that you will write them down as they occur and turn these guides into your books.

• ITALICS AND BOXES

Case study illustrations have been printed in italics and been boxed to highlight them for your easy retrieval when you remember an example particularly relevant to your own situation but can't quite remember where you read it.

Most of these illustrations were drawn from other parts of this Final Report. See page ii for a complete listing of them.

• RESOURCES

The last section of each guide is a Resources piece which lists all references used in the text (most have been footnoted as well).

In addition, we have included what we think are useful listings that might be of help or further information to readers wishing to get deeper into a topic.

These resources represent a selection of those that we have found to be particularly helpful. We offer them to you in the hope that some will provide some help in your work.

Introduction
On Being A Map Maker

INTRODUCTION: ON BEING A MAP MAKER

WHAT ARE SOME IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS OF MAPPING THE SCHOOL'S ENVIRONMENT?

As a new-school planner, you need to address yourself to two major task areas:

- Designing and developing the new school calls for creative and technical skills as you envision, plan, and establish structures to operationalize the school.
- Acquiring necessary resources and support from the environment* requires political astuteness and initiative if you are to make the proper connections with people in the district administration and the community.

The first task area is basically internal to the planners and the school. Your internal map charts the arrangements of people, time, and actions that are necessary to create a functioning school.

The second is external, using influence strategies for maneuvering in the school's larger setting. Your external map plots the environment's key people, their powers and goals, and what you need to get or avoid from them.

We are concerned here with developing the external, environmental map -- and in navigating through the environment, using your map. The most common trap is to pay attention only to the internal map. The school is an open system, and you cannot afford to ignore its environment. What you don't know can hurt you.

---

*"Environment" is used here to refer to those people and organizations in the district and community with a stake in your school. They may supervise its opening, provide resources, pay taxes to support it, send their children to it, etc.

▶ PURPOSE OF MAPPING

Mapping the environment offers planners and implementers a means of predicting what actions to choose and what the outcomes are likely to be. Even the best school plan may never become reality if a strategic approach to acquiring resources and support in the environment is not used.

Good mapping offers, at best, a shot at getting what you need from the environment. Bad mapping practically ensures defeat.

Mapping is complicated, no matter what the situation. Some environments are more predictable than others. Many planners report that communities are less predictable than formal organizations because it is harder to pinpoint all of the variables operating in a diverse community. Formal structures are characterized by a finite number of positions and goals. Then, too, in communities prevailing norms play a large part, as was reported by a planner who compared suburban middle class areas with large cities:

> *Suburban communities that I've dealt with are less predictable about school issues than are neighborhoods in a large city, where participation in decision making about education is much more limited by the insulation and largeness of the bureaucratic machine. The suburban normative climate dictates much more lay input by its naturally decentralized structure and its greater degree of lay control over tax and budget decisions.*

One hapless principal, hired from out of state to implement an open space elementary school in Lincoln Acres, a suburban community, ran straight into this trap:

> *He began by methodically mapping out the immediate bureaucratic environment, but he did not anticipate the community's norm for near-universal parent participation in educational issues. His strategies for coping with the environment were inadequate because they ignored the close interface between school and community.*

The outcome for the school was a demoralizing and upsetting conflict in which parents pressured school officials to build walls in the open space and to redefine totally the vision of the faculty-planners.

▶ PROBLEMS OF MAPPING

New school planners, especially if their design is an innovative one, tend to face special problems in mapping their environments accurately. Because they are hacking a new path through the forest, perhaps with different departure and destination points from their more traditional peers, they are beset with such difficulties as their own uncertainty and resistance to the old methods:

- Uncertainty -- Their present and future are in constant motion; the unknowns are numerous and usually critical to their planning.

  Two planning groups facing similar unknowns handled them in different ways, one more successfully than the other:

A group planning College High, a city high school that would hook up with a local college, faced the constant unknowns of funding and a physical location for their program. This group, unable to deal with the high level of uncertainty, fell into a tailspin of circular planning -- they never made any decisions that stuck and they continually rediscussed the same issues. The frustration level was high. The productivity level was low: They were still "planning," up until the school was put on "hold" by the district office.

Another group planned Arts Coop, a regional high school for the arts that needed funding from six school districts as well as a central location. While the group's uncertainty level was also high, their approach was direct and, in the end, successful: They continued planning as though they were certain of a school opening and coupled their internal work with extensive connecting with people

> *and organizations in their environment. Their footholds on many environmental fronts gave them insight into determining their next steps and a therapeutic sense of dealing with their environment, rather than being bent by it.*

A second problem facing new school planners in particular has to do with:

- Resistance to old methods -- Often new school planners are designing alternative schools with very different norms and sanctions than those characteristic of traditional settings. The planners themselves may resist thinking in bureaucratic terms and want to avoid political dealing.

  Often their plans are anti-structures: "Whatever the Establishment has, we want the opposite." In the case of the faculty-planners of the Lincoln Acres open space suburban school, the researcher notes:

> *They tried to create an idealistic anti-bureaucratic vision that avoided political wheeling and dealing. But they soon discovered that even though the goal of the internal system was to set out different expectations for behavior, they could only reach it through an understanding of the context of the new school in the larger system. They learned that in order to fight bureaucratic power and establish their alternative, they would have to learn about the power relationships and even resort to bureaucratic means to manage environmental constraints.*

Sniffing out probable effects in advance of taking action is important but not guaranteed to be foolproof. One planner noted:

> *You deal with the unpredictable as soon as you begin to innovate. Often it's very difficult to know what will upset people and what won't.*

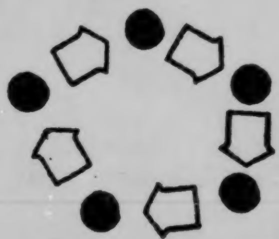
But let's face it: What you don't know can hurt you. You're better off if you really know your environment, what will pass, what won't, who can help, who can hinder.

A good data collection system should provide you with enough information so that you can know the general stand on a particular issue and therefore plan your way around it if need be. Most people underestimate the power of information. It's like turning on the lights in a darkened room: Once they're on, you can move with confidence.

MAPPING -- AND USING THE MAP

Mapping your environment is not isolated from action. It is a continuing, evolving program of:

- Acquiring information
- Planning approaches
- Taking action
- Analyzing outcomes
- Incorporating that information into new planning, taking further action, and so forth



While these actions may sound overly rational, they really shake down to conscious acting upon and reacting to your environment. Trust your intuition and "feel" of a situation. But try to make sure you have the data. That's what this book is about.

All members of the planning group will be involved to some extent in mapping activities, even if limited to "keeping eyes and ears open" to relevant happenings in the larger setting and reporting back to the group. Think in terms of building a network for supplying information and support.

Generally, though, a planning/implementation group will have one person with primary responsibility for coordinating environmental contact work. This person may be the leader of the group or any other member who is particularly skilled in connecting with people.

This package will deal in turn with the following dimensions of mapping your environment and acting on your evolving map:

- The dynamics of the group: Organization, goal setting, the process for accomplishing something

- The dynamics of the environment: Mapping it, using it, understanding its processes, protecting the group from environmental incursions

- The dynamics of the interface between the group and the environment

It's easier to get to where you're going (realizing your innovative, new school) if you have a map of the environment.

▶ MORALITY OF MAPPING AND POLITICAL ACTION

Another assumption at work in these materials is that the responsible use of power or political strategies is not bad or immoral. Rather, it is smart, and necessary.

"Politics," while an essential and practical aspect of new school life, tends to be seen by many school people as impure, manipulative, dirty, not really devoted to professional matters or to what's best for children.

Many people believe that using power to attain goals is corrupt and, in the end, self-destructive, because it then becomes the major focus of those who try to use it.

Any persuasive effort (aimed at achieving a desired change) is political. Those who consider politics impure run the risk of being constrained or blocked (often needlessly) by existing structures of the environment.

Power can be used corruptly, but you don't have to use it that way. Sometimes you have to dodge the arrows, or know the right game to play, or know somebody in the right place in order to get what you need.

Many people prefer to persuade others of the rightness of their position, to convince them and to enlighten them. This works well in many situations, but as Mark Twain said, "you can't change a man's mind if his income depends on holding that point of view."

Using power requires sensitivity to one's environment, adeptness at gauging the similarities between others' aims and one's own, and artfulness in satisfying both sides. This is a WIN/WIN STRATEGY. It is proactive.

Powerlessness, on the other hand, dooms you to failure. It requires no skill other than that of throttling one's selfesteem and sense of shaping the future. It is not admirable, healthy, or fun. And you won't be honored for having exhibited it. It is merely reactive.

When you think of it, power simply means "to be able..." Therefore, if you believe:

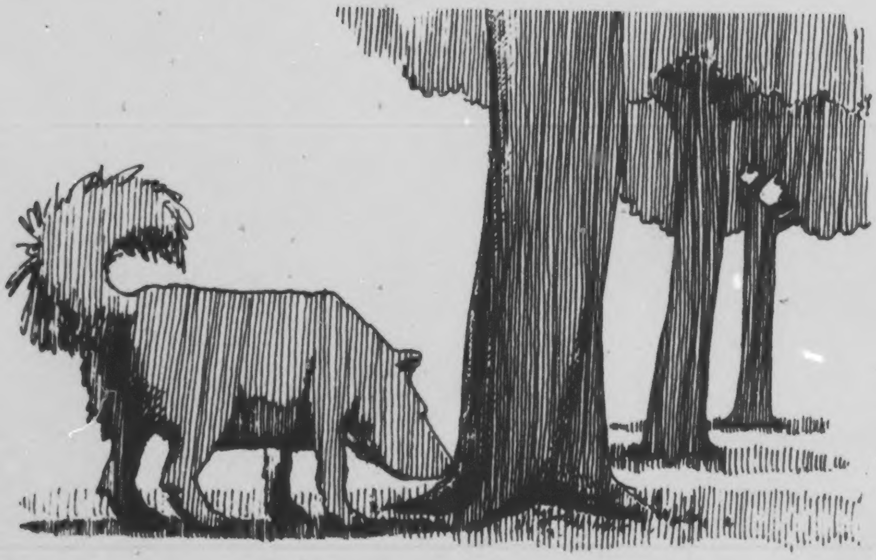
- That if you don't go after what you need, you probably won't get what you need, and
- That getting what you need means knowing and valuing what others need too, then

This guide can help you with:

- Taking a positive, realistic approach to getting what you need for your school, and
- Learning a set of strategies and tactics that you can use when the situation feels right.

☞ REMEMBER: NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT USING POWER, SOMEBODY IS USING IT OUT THERE RIGHT NOW.

Module 1
Survey Your Environment



SURVEY YOUR ENVIRONMENT

1

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN DEFINING ENVIRONMENT?
HOW CAN WE BROADEN OUR INFORMATION BASE?
WHAT ABOUT IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS?

If you are to know your school environment and how to maneuver in it to get what you need for your school, you will have to:

- Define your environment
- Broaden your information base
- Identify key stakeholders*

These dimensions of surveying your environment will be dealt with in turn in this module.

Remember that knowing your environment is a continuous process. Stay in constant touch with its changes, which vary from fairly active ones to the deadeningly slow.

"Good planning dictates that you scout all strange, new territory as you advance just to make certain there are no pitfalls ahead."**

---

* "Stakeholder" is anyone who is invested in the outcome of your school, e.g., parents, an assistant superintendent, teachers' representative, students, Board of Education member, etc.

**Koberg, Don, and Jim Bagnall, The Universal Traveler. Los Altos, CA: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1973, p. 90.

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN DEFINING ENVIRONMENT?

While the notion of defining the environment seems to be simple and self-evident, it will help if you keep these points in mind as you connect with others:

- Distinguishing the inside from the outside
- Different ways of looking at environments
- Recognizing the multi-power system

DISTINGUISHING THE INSIDE FROM THE OUTSIDE

It is important to maintain a dividing line between your planning group (the inside) and its environment (the outside). This line will shift as you add and lose members. The boundary is permeable and is subject to the group's growing social connections with the outside environment.

What's at stake, and will be determined by the inside-outside definition, is the degree of group unity and trust. As planners engaged in a struggle to realize your plans, you must maneuver among key people to help you along.

Political strategizing is a fact of life, but it has no place inside the "home." Members must build and maintain trust in their leaders and each other. Primary loyalty should be within the group. Otherwise, a credibility gap will grow ("if we can't trust ourselves, who can we trust?"). Defensiveness among members could threaten the whole structure of the group and the future of the school.

One experienced planner of innovative schools summed up his approach as:

> *My framework comes out of organization development (OD). I define my job as having two parts: An inside and an outside, which are very clearly differentiated. On the inside I use OD management techniques, where everything is open. Then I see*

the rest of the world as external, or political. There it's a competition, where I'm mostly concerned about getting what I need, both now and in the longer run.

See Module 2 for more on group functioning.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF LOOKING AT ENVIRONMENTS

We can talk generally about many different environments in the same way that we might talk about a "community of scholars," the "parent community," the "business community," and so forth. Or, we can mass everybody together into a vague blob called simply "The Community."

A third and more practical way is to make a distinction between the school's district environment, by which is meant the district bureaucracy of which it will become a part, and its community environment, including parents, community associations, business owners, and others having some stake in the development of the new school.

As you connect with various stakeholders, you will begin to define and categorize them so that you can deal with them more effectively. For example, a planning group that is creating a high school specialized in business training would be very much attuned to its surrounding business community.

Constraints coming from each of these two parts of the environment would differ. That is, bureaucratic constraints (the school district as it is affected by the state education department and the city government) will tend to be tighter and more technical than would the social/cultural norms and expectations coming from the more general community.

RECOGNIZING THE MULTI-POWER SYSTEM

Any new school is affected by many stakeholders: You, the planning group, engaged in the process of developing the school's goals and design, and actively seeking to make it a reality; and a large range of outside stakeholders (parents, teachers union, district administrators, community agencies), who can exert considerable pressure to bend the school in the direction desired.

Public school systems do not concentrate power in any one stakeholder, despite the seemingly unapproachable, cool stance of some building staff in relation to their surrounding communities.

Because public schools are "domesticated," that is, owned by the public, they are guaranteed survival (once they have come into existence) but must accept in trade the legitimacy of stakeholder pressure for or against their innovative ideas.

When planning groups and outside stakeholders differ in their ideas of what the new school should be doing, the future of the school as designed by the planning group can look a bit shaky. Planners may have envisioned a business school with an interdisciplinary, liberal arts framework, whereas the business community might push for a school that trains students to be acceptable employees. Or, elementary school parents may shoot down a rezoning proposal that is basic to the planners' design because it would take their children too far away from home.

☞ NEVER UNDERESTIMATE OUTSIDE STAKEHOLDERS' ABILITY TO ORGANIZE AGAINST AN ISSUE AND TO DEFEAT IT. IT'S EASIER TO UNDERCUT A PROGRAM THAN TO MAKE ONE GO!

Exercise

On the following page is "DEFINE YOUR ENVIRONMENT," a short exercise that can provide your group with necessary information about your environment as well as help to build cohesion within the group.

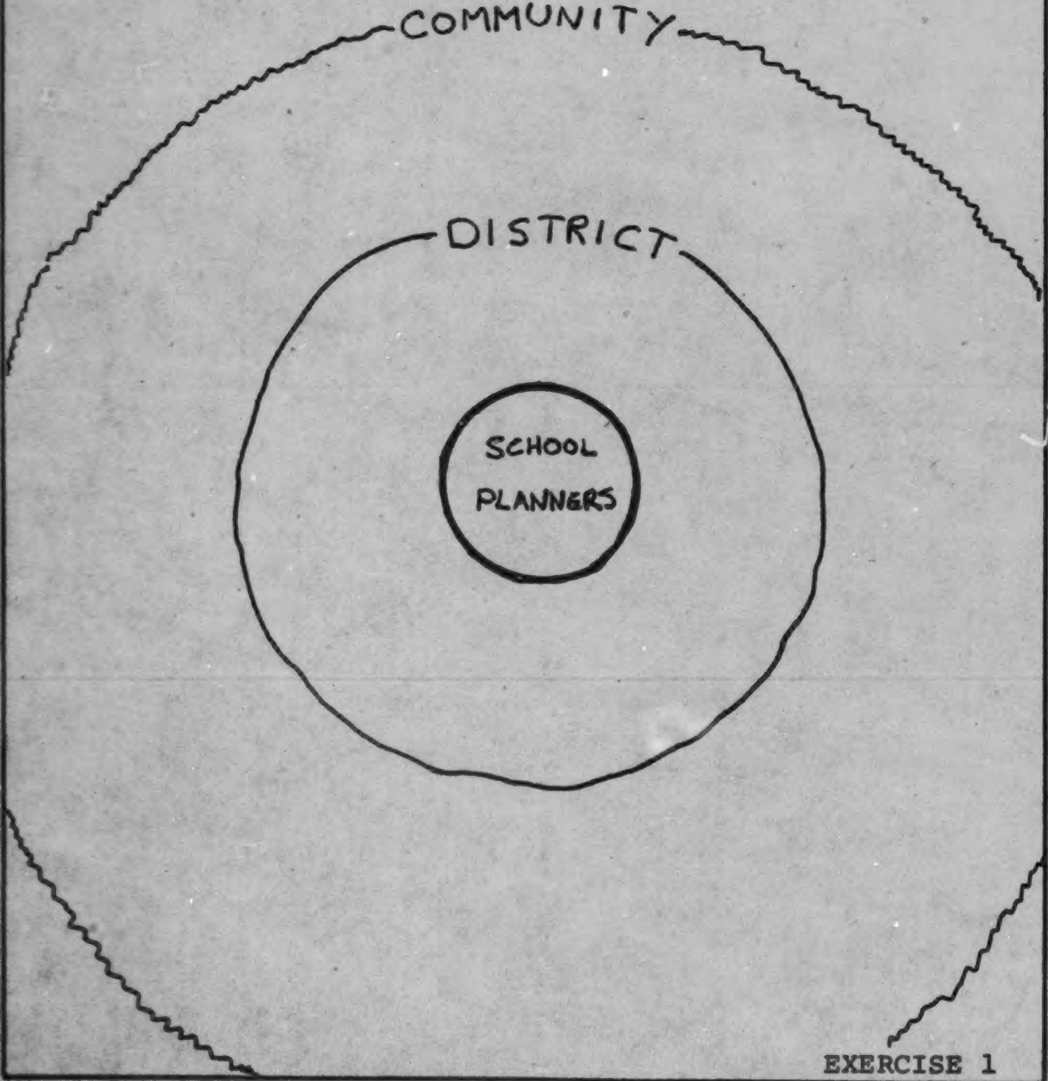
When a group maintains such a chart, it becomes an excellent tool for political education. It is extraordinary how much critical information is readily available, needing only to be pulled together.

DO

DEFINE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

(15-20 min)

1. IN YOUR OWN SITUATION, WHICH OUTSIDE STAKEHOLDERS DO YOU THINK YOUR GROUP WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH? WRITE THEM BELOW.
2. WILL THEY HELP OR HINDER YOU? UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS? PUT A + OR A - BESIDE EACH STAKEHOLDER YOU'VE IDENTIFIED.
3. PUT AN * BESIDE THE ONE(S) THAT YOU THINK WILL REQUIRE A LOT OF GROUP ENERGY TO WIN OVER OR TO DEFUSE.



EXERCISE 1

HOW CAN WE BROADEN OUR INFORMATION BASE?

If you have been around your particular system and environment for awhile, you probably already have some insight into how certain people view certain issues, how questions get decided, and who makes which decisions.

Now you must expand your knowledge base as much as possible. Focus on those facets of the environment with which you need to deal.

THE DISTRICT OFFICES

School bureaucracies are not only tradition-bound but innovation-resistant as well. In many school districts, the bureaucratic personnel selection process and the socialization patterns that obtain every work day reinforce such employee aims as getting job security and setting up individual monarchies of control.

Because their rewards often come only from maintaining control, employees in a bureaucracy are likely to feel threatened by anything new or innovative.

On the other hand, if properly "involved" in creating the innovation, bureaucratic personnel may support it by helping it along through the right channels.

The difference can be that of having your request for action sit on somebody's desk for weeks versus bypassing it entirely.

Because the bureaucracy and the people working in it can block or aid your efforts, you must get clear on their:

- Formal and informal decision-making structures
- Official rules, regulations, and laws
- Informal rules, norms, and values
- Priorities and goals

You can get such information from organization charts, progress and final reports of the district, printed brochures, and newspaper accounts of school board and district decisions.

But a better way to add to your store of knowledge is to nurture your relationships with people who are well connected in the bureaucracy. Ask them questions!

☞ IF THEY SEE YOU AS HELPFUL TO THEM, IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST TO HELP YOU.

THE COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

If it were your plan to open a traditional type of school, you probably would have little difficulty in convincing others of its merit. You'd have a good deal of support because people would be familiar with it. They'd know what you had in mind, they could envision what it would look like, and they'd have a good sense of how it would work to produce what outcomes.

People often are very accepting of ends and means that fit well with their own. Investment in the success of the project and their own reduced level of uncertainty are the products of a good fit. Keep this truism in mind as you broaden your circle of contacts.

Some segments of your community will have a greater stake in the development of the new school than will others. Once your plans become more visible, they too will surface.

Find out about them such things as their:

- Key influence people - the "movers"
- Goals and priorities
- Basic concerns and interests
- Norms and expectations

Get such information by enlarging your circle of acquaintances; asking many questions; attending open school board meetings; attending business, civic, and community group meetings; taking people out for a drink or joining them for lunch.

Whatever means you select, be sure to aim for getting good readings of people's concerns and expectations. The more you know about stakeholders' aims, the better you'll be able to point out the similarities between theirs and yours. And the more they'll know about those concerns and expectations of yours that you choose to share.

Exercise

On the next page is "EXCHANGE RATES," which consists of some questions to ask yourself and questions to ask important stakeholders. They will help you to focus on the idea of exchanges in the environment.

Answer the questions as a group. You may want to keep your answers handy for referral from time to time as you interact with your environment.

EXCHANGE RATES

(20-30 min)

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT STAKEHOLDERS:

1. What are they most interested in doing? In having? In avoiding?
2. What can they actually do to help us?
3. What can they actually do to hinder us?
4. How do they perceive us and what we're trying to do?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELVES:

1. What are we most interested in trying to do? To get? To avoid?
2. How do we feel about what we're most interested in?
3. What can we do for them?
4. What can we do to make their lives difficult, if it comes to that?

EXCHANGES:

1. How can we stress similarities in our aims and theirs?
2. How can we help them and get what we want too?

EXERCISE 2

▶ SUPPORTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Begin to think in terms of the supports and constraints that the district and community environments represent to your new-school planning and implementation.

- What can they do to help us?
- What can they do to hinder us?
- How can we encourage the helps and avoid the hindrances?

Building the supports that you have is a way of attracting even more.

Defusing or soft pedaling the constraints will prevent them from taking you over.

- SUPPORTS are usually people, such as:

  + A sympathetic school board member
  + A forward-thinking superintendent
  + The president of the Chamber of Commerce
  + An official in the state department of education
  + A civic (but not necessarily educational) group
  + The secretary to the assistant superintendent
  + A group of citizens for educational options
  + The manager of school district equipment and supplies
  + Secretaries in the district offices

Supportive people can be found everywhere in the bureaucracy and in the larger community. It's up to you to locate them and get to know them.

If they support you, they'll relax some rules for you. Or, if the rules happen to be favorable to innovative projects (pretty rare, but sometimes the case), supportive people will see that you know about them and benefit from them.

Non-people supports can include some legal procedures, norms, budget lines, material resources, etc. But you'll usually need people to interpret them in your favor.

- CONSTRAINTS usually consist of two types:

BUREAUCRATIC BOUNDARIES -- These are generally on paper in some dusty office, but they are interpreted more or less vigorously by some human being. Their official names are:

- Standard operating procedures
- Legal regulations
- Budgetary restrictions

Because they're crisper, more defined, they are easier to identify and to circumvent, if necessary.

NORMS AND VALUES -- These constraints are not written down anywhere. They're soft counter-forces that you just have to know about. They require more ingenious methods of getting around. Some examples are:

- School isn't "fun city" -- kids are there to learn the basics, not the frills
- Teachers teach and students learn
- Parents know what is best for their children
- Our teachers couldn't function in a new environment

Constraints are easier to find than are supports. They either block you immediately or leap out at you just when you thought you'd made it.

Constraints may be enforced by people in the bureaucracy or the larger community who:

- Fear change. It threatens their security.
- Don't have any other fun in life
- Take their duties very seriously
- May not like your new school plans
- May not like you

Constraint-enforcers will make you meet every single requirement, reconsider all of your planning, and still may get you. The rezoning plan falls through. Building certificates are delayed. Union regulations are observed to the letter.

People in these work capacities need to observe these rules, for their own future protection. You need to learn to deal with that reality.

There may be solutions, ways of getting around the rules, or ignoring them. You must first find out what they are.

☞ DON'T TRY TO CONVERT THE REAL RESISTERS.

If you attempt to work with the real resisters, you'll only lock them tighter into their positions. And you'll drain your energy.

Work instead with middle people and supporters. Build on what you have. Work with people who want to work with you. Ask them to name others who could help you.

Exercise

On the next page is "LIST THE GOOD AND THE BAD," an exercise to be done either alone or together with members of your planning group.

Example: Suppose that one aspect of your design calls for hiring community artists to teach in your school. An environmental support might be found in a community group that seeks educational options (involving the community in education) or in considering budgetary restrictions that would not be stretched because union wages would not be required.

On the other hand, an environmental constraint could come from the teachers association, which might object to your hiring practices as contrary to the letter of the contract.

When you have finished, discuss your entries in terms of the aspects of your school that are especially dependent upon various facets of the environment.

As you acquire more information about your environment, revise your list of entries from time to time.

DO

LIST THE GOOD AND THE BAD (10-15 min)

1. Using the chart below, list what you think are some supports and constraints as they relate to particular aspects of the design of your new school. (See the example on the previous page.)

2. Discuss your entries, particularly in terms of how to strengthen the supports and minimize constraints.

3. You may find it useful to keep these lists up to date.

ENVIRONMENT	ASPECTS OF SCHOOL DESIGN	
		SUPPORTS
		CONSTRAINTS

EXERCISE 3

WHAT ABOUT IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS?

Remember, at the same time that you are turning your gaze toward your environment in an effort to know and benefit from it, people in the environment are looking at YOU.

That environment can range anywhere from a highly restrictive one that applies many constraints to the new school as to what can and cannot be done to a very generous one that enforces fewer rules and supplies needed resources.

Your environment will tend to assess your new school on four counts:

- PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS applied to the design and operation of the new school, or

  "How good is this school, anyway?"

- STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION with the school, or

  "How do administrators/parents/taxpayers/the Board/ students feel about the school?"

- ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT of the school, or

  "How is the school affecting the operations, rules, and special interests of the district and community?"

- PERSONAL QUALITIES of the planners, or

  "What do people think of you, your manner, your style of dress?"

WHO ARE THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS?

Ask around -- who are the powerful folk in the:

- Bureaucracy?
- Community?

Good people to check with are trustworthy friends who have been around the district for awhile, newspaper reporters, and alternative organization members.

Develop a "web" or network of information contacts. Expand it by finding out who else might be able to help.

Find out who associates with the key people. Make new contacts.

Pick up any details about them that are available -- their goals, what they think is important in a school, how involved in every little decision they want to be, what they enjoy doing, and so on.

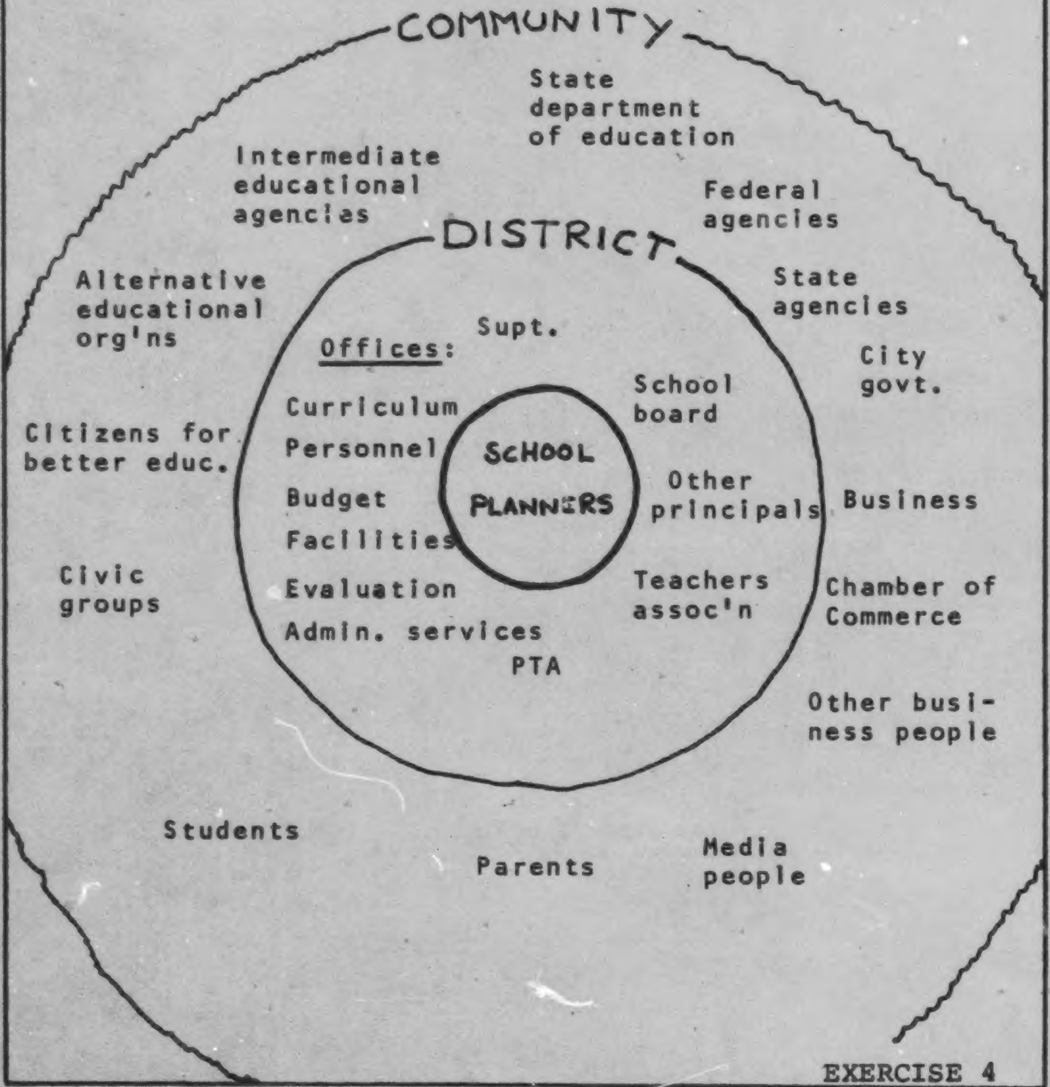
Exercise

On the following page is "RE-ASSESS KEY STAKEHOLDERS," which provides some ideas for stakeholder categories. You may work on it alone or in the group. You may want to refer to Exercises 1 and 3 as you look at it and make additions to it.

RE-ASSESS KEY STAKEHOLDERS (20-30 min)

THIS DIAGRAM HAS SOME POTENTIALLY KEY STAKEHOLDER CATEGORIES THAT COULD HELP OR HINDER YOU.

1. ADD ANY OTHERS THAT MIGHT BE MISSING.
2. WRITE IN NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS THAT YOU THINK OF IN EACH CATEGORY.


COMMUNITY
State department of education
Intermediate educational agencies
Federal agencies
DISTRICT
Alternative educational org'ns
State agencies
Supt.
Offices:
City govt.
School board
Curriculum
Citizens for better educ.
Personnel
SCHOOL PLANNERS
Other principals
Budget
Business
Facilities
Civic groups
Evaluation
Teachers assoc'n
Chamber of Commerce
Admin. services
PTA
Other business people
Students
Parents
Media people

EXERCISE 4

▶ WHAT CAN KEY STAKEHOLDERS DO FOR YOU?

They can make your life heavenly or hellish, depending on whether or not they like you.

From the district you can get such needed items as:

- Hiring selection rights (from the person who controls the job lists)
- Competency certificates quicker than anyone else
- Money for in-service training, consultants, released time
- Needed equipment and materials without the usual delay
- Limited hassling/fast approvals (autonomy to do what you have to do)

From the teachers union you can get their blessings and support in dealing with other groups, and some flexibility in normal hiring procedures.

From state and federal agencies you can get grants for planning, training, and experimentation, as well as information, expertise, consultants, knowledge, answers.

From the larger community you can get endorsements that will enhance your image in the eyes of other segments of the community and thereby attract new supporters. For example, an endorsement from the president of a large corporation or from a parents organization will swing others to your corner.

You will have to cover all of these fronts to some extent. The most immediate attention probably will go to the bureaucracy and the teachers union, since they have crisp rules and enough direct power to stop you.

One school director instituted a full-time staff position for developing and maintaining friendly relations with key stakeholders. It worked.

▶ HOW CAN YOU GAIN ACCESS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS?

You must ask a lot of questions about who does what; find out which offices and groups are essential to your work; make it your business to go to their offices and talk with people there, ask their advice, go out to lunch with them. Your time and efforts will be rewarded.

Ask for their help, thank them, recognize them, send them gumdrops of information that recognize their needs/ interests. But, don't overdo it, or you'll give them an inflated sense of their importance. In the end, this could have the effect of deflating the importance of your project.

Exercise

On the next page is "SEE CONNECTIONS," an exercise designed to help you to think categorically about your connections with people in the environment and your relation to them.

Do this exercise as a group. When you finish, you will have a list of contact people, the group's connection to them, and ideas on what you have to offer the contact people in terms of their self-interests.

DO

SEE CONNECTIONS

(20-30 min)

With your group, look at the diagram in Exercise 4. Then fill in the chart below by asking yourselves:

1. Who do we know in those places?
2. What are their self-interests?
3. Which of us has the best connection to them?

An example is filled in below.

FACETS OF ENVIRONMENT	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT PERSON'S SELF-INTERESTS	GROUP'S CONNECTION
Supt.'s office	Ms. Fierce	Credit if school does well	Fred

EXERCISE 5

▶ MAINTAIN SELF-AWARENESS WHEN DEALING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

In your dealings with people in the bureaucracy or the larger environment, be aware of the impression that you are creating of yourself and of the new school.

Be very clear about your objectives in each encounter. Also, stay clear about what their self-interests are and about what you can give them. It's the only way you can stay on top of things.

Remember that you have something to offer stakeholders. It could be such items as:

- Credit for having helped the school come into existence
- Glory, if the school turns out to be enormously successful
- Skills that are needed by the stakeholder, e.g., some consulting work
- Influencing a friend of yours whose decision is pivotal to a stakeholder whose help you are seeking
- Information
- Respect and acceptance
- Later: Always thanks for their help -- by letter, public recognition, etc.

Control the flow of information that you give out. Your purpose, after all, is to get information, advice, help, and cooperation. Give only necessary information that will not be used against you later.

Keep your relationships with stakeholders friendly. Don't take up any more of their time than you have to.

Module 2
Build Group Strengths

BUILD GROUP STRENGTHS 2

HOW CAN WE MOBILIZE GROUP ENERGY?
HOW CAN WE IMPROVE GROUP FUNCTIONING?
WHAT ABOUT PRESENTING A UNITED FRONT?

If you are and intend to continue operating as a "Lone Ranger" in gathering support for your new school, skip this module.

If you are alone but would like to recruit some cohorts to help in cushioning the pangs of isolation and powerlessness that you might be experiencing, this module could be helpful.

If, like most planners/implementers, you are working with others who have a share in this task of foraging in the environment, you may get some good ideas from this section.*

Whether you are the leader or a member of your group, there are some aspects of group functioning that you ought to know about and incorporate into your work.

This module deals with how to:

- Mobilize group energy
- Improve group functioning
- Present a united front

Your success in acquiring resources and environmental endorsements depends to a large extent upon how seriously you take your mission and how committed you are to "winning" the battle.

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* Group building in this manual is limited to those aspects necessary for dealing with the environment. For a fuller treatment of group functioning, see GUIDE 1: SETTING THE STAGE FOR PLANNING.

If you are to "win" what you need for your school, you must put in time and energy. Drifting along in the hopes that "everything will turn out all right in the end" won't work. The consequences of passivity are:

- Not getting what you want
- Having things taken away from you
- Having to do things you don't want to do

Waiting passively and hoping for others to do things for you usually ends up with their doing things to you. In politics, as in life, you get what you ask for.

HOW CAN WE MOBILIZE GROUP ENERGY?

A group that is mobilized and ready for action can be described as having at least these four qualities: Investment, cohesiveness, goal focus, and a problem-sloving approach. These qualities are treated in turn.

▶INVESTMENT IN THE PROJECT

The task of planning and implementing a new school is fraught with uncertainty, district constraints, competition for resources, and changing conditions.

If the new school is ever to come into existence, it will be due to the planning group's persistence and commitment to making that happen. Large amounts of time and energy will be expended before and after the school opens.

Once the initial enthusiasm and project novelty begin to dim, what feeds the group's sense of commitment generally centers upon the:

- Sense of participation in decision making
- Shared envisioning of the school
- Taking responsibility for a task and completing it

A mobilized group is invested (both on a personal and a group level) in seeing its plans actualized.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR GROUP'S INVESTMENT IN THE PROJECT?

/ / / /

LOW MODERATE HIGH VERY HIGH

▶GROUP COHESIVENESS

To become a "group," a collection of people generally moves through four development stages: "Forming" (getting together) gives way to "storming" (conflict between members) which turns into "norming" (agreeing on a structure and aims) and finally culminates in "performing" (the group functions, gets work done).*

The result is group cohesiveness, which is characterized by:

- Trust within the group
- Identification with the group, belongingness
- Collaboration on tasks
- Satisfaction with how the group functions

The mobilized group is cohesive in its approach to the tasks of starting a new school.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR GROUP'S COHESIVENESS?

/ LOW — / MODERATE — / HIGH — / VERY HIGH

▶ GOAL-FOCUSED BEHAVIOR

Having a goal means having a possible success. Without a focus, your activities and encounters in your environment will be relatively futile.**

Whether your goal is getting money for inservice training or getting community backing on your rezoning proposal, you need a focus for your efforts.

Goal-focused behavior requires:

- Clearly understood goals
- Acceptance of the goals' value by members

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* Tuckman, Bruce W., "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," Psychological Bulletin, 63, 1965, pp. 384-399.

**We are talking here about particular things you want from the environment, not the goals for the school as such. See GUIDE 2: DESIGNING YOUR SCHOOL for a treatment of clarifying goals.

- Belief that the goals are attainable
- Keeping the goals in mind during all interactions with power holders

A mobilized group knows what it wants and thus has a better chance of getting it.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR GROUP'S GOAL-FOCUSED BEHAVIOR?

LOW MODERATE HIGH VERY HIGH

PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

There may be internal group functioning problems. There could be difficulties in dealing with people in the district offices or larger community. Hardships in adapting to some environmental demands are not uncommon. One thing is certain: There will be problems.

The group that asks "How can we handle this?" rather than "Why is this happening to us?" or, "Can we handle this?" is off to a good start.

Effective problem solving involves:

- Recognizing that a problem exists (as opposed to denial or unawareness)
- Identifying helps and hindrances that affect the problem
- Inventing possible solutions to the problem
- Selecting one or more solutions
- Anticipating possible barriers to carrying out the plan successfully and then revising it, if needed
- Trying the plan
- Evaluating its effectiveness

The mobilized group approaches problems directly and effectively.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR GROUP'S PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH?

LOW MODERATE HIGH VERY HIGH

The effectiveness with which a group mobilizes, plans, and carries out its activities is the difference between a live school and a paper school.

Exercise

On the next page is "WHAT WENT WRONG?," an exercise which presents some real data from observations of a planning group in action and then asks you to problem-solve their situation.

First, read the short description, and then answer the questions in a group discussion format or, if you prefer, individually.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

(15-20 min)

READ THE DESCRIPTION BELOW AND THEN ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE. YOU MAY WORK INDIVIDUALLY OR AS A GROUP. IF YOU WORK ALONE, HOWEVER, YOU MIGHT WISH TO COMPARE YOUR RESPONSES TO THOSE OF OTHERS FOR ADDITIONAL IDEAS.

The College High planning group had considered several different models for the high school they were charged with creating. Several members latched onto the idea of a "family" structure of small groups of students and teachers. They engaged in many meetings to detail this idea, but met with little success, partly because not everyone was committed to the model and partly because they never made decisions that stuck.

In the meantime, some members of the group felt that the future of the school was in jeopardy because of highly uncertain funding. Several ideas emerged as ways to gain some backing for the school.

One idea was to get some parents involved so they could drum up community support. Several parents came to the first meeting and listened to the planning group explain their ideas. Unfortunately, the explanations weren't very clear and different members expressed contrary ideas to those of the others. The parents left with the impression that the planning group didn't know what they were doing.

The planning group later invited a number of parents (the same who had attended the first meeting plus a few new ones) to dinner so that they could talk informally about the new school plans. Only two or three parents showed up and after dinner, they too informed the group that they were confused by the planners' ideas.

(Please turn the page.)

EXERCISE 6

1. WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

____

____

2. WAS THIS PLANNING GROUP MOBILIZED AND READY FOR ACTION?

_____ YES _____ NO _____ SOMEWHAT

3. EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER TO NUMBER 2.

____

____

____

4. WHAT WOULD YOUR ADVICE TO THIS GROUP HAVE BEEN BEFORE THEY TOOK ACTION?

____

____

____

5. WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE THIS GROUP TO DO NOW?

____

____

____

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE GROUP FUNCTIONING?

Even if only one or two people in the group actually get involved in connecting with outside stakeholders, it is important that the whole group function well together to provide the needed support for that connecting. How well does your group work together?

This section will deal with two areas:

- Assessing group strengths
- Improving group strengths

They will be treated in turn.

▶ ASSESSING GROUP STRENGTHS

You may feel that your group is efficient and supportive. There is little need for improvement.

On the other hand, you may have a vague (or a definite) feeling that something isn't quite right, that there are some problems somewhere that need to be settled, before you can be effective in mapping and acting upon your environment.

Often, group members are reluctant to turn their gaze inward to identify difficulties in their own functioning. They may believe that:

- Everybody has these problems and nothing can be done to make them go away.
- It would take too much time to try to identify and solve the problems when so much else must get done.
- It would open a can of wormy problems that are best left alone.
- There are no problems; everything is fine.

It is a good idea to assess group functioning from time to time. Why? Because:

- Something can be done to solve problems of functioning.
- The time required to do so is time well spent.
- The wormy problems are already taking a toll; it's best to air the "stuff" that's holding you back and figure out a way to deal with it.
- You may learn something.

☞ GROUP SELF-ANALYSIS IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH.

Exercise

Beginning on the following page is "QUESTIONING," a series of questions to help you diagnose your group's effectiveness.

Answer the questions individually. The exercise following this one will give you the opportunity to discuss your responses with others in the group.

Appoint a facilitator to read through both of the exercises ahead of time to prepare for guiding the group as you work.

These two exercises are best done in one session, if possible.

Exercise

This exercise, "QUESTION-AIRING," is the follow-up to "QUESTIONING" described above. It provides a means for tallying responses to "QUESTIONING," interpreting the responses, and discussing the results.

"QUESTION-AIRING" should be done as a group, with a person appointed as facilitator for the activities.

At the end of the exercise, each person will summarize, individually, the strong and weak points of the group's functioning based on the responses and the discussion.

QUESTIONING

(20-30 min)

Read the following statements about group functioning. Beneath each one is a scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Circle the letter that best fits how you think your group actually is, not how you think it ought to be. Write an example of a real event, action, or situation that describes your response on the scale. Be honest. When everyone has finished answering the questions, there will be an opportunity for discussion.

1. I THINK EVERYONE IS VERY CLEAR ON AND "OWNS" THE GOALS AND DESIGN OF THE NEW SCHOOL.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

2. I FEEL THAT I CAN INFLUENCE THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THE GROUP MOVES -- MY IDEAS GET IN.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

(Please turn the page.)

3. I THINK THAT I KNOW WHAT RESOURCES/ENDORSEMENTS WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON GETTING FOR THE SCHOOL.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

4. I KNOW SOME GOOD METHODS FOR GETTING SOME OF THE RESOURCES/ENDORSEMENTS THAT WE NEED.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

5. I FEEL THAT OUR GROUP IS FUNCTIONING AS A TEAM; WE'RE ALL WORKING TOGETHER TO DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

6. WHEN THERE'S A CONFLICT, WE THOROUGHLY AIR OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW, THEN WE TRY TO FIND A SOLUTION THAT MAKES SENSE TO EVERYONE IN THE GROUP.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

7. I BELIEVE THAT IT'S OK FOR US TO USE POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND TACTICS TO GET WHAT WE NEED.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

8. WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO GET WHAT WE NEED.

A	B	C	D	E
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

EXAMPLE(S):

End of questioning.

DD

QUESTION-AIRING

(1½-2 hrs)
TOTAL

There are three steps in this activity: Tallying the responses, interpreting the responses, and discussing the results.

A. TALLYING THE RESPONSES

(15-20 min)

Use the form below for tallying members' responses. Mark the number of times a particular response was selected. You may wish to transfer the tally form to newsprint for easier viewing. Do not discuss your responses yet.

	strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree
AGREEMENT	___	___	___	___	___
CONTRIBUTIONS	___	___	___	___	___
WHAT IS NEEDED	___	___	___	___	___
METHODS TO USE	___	___	___	___	___
TEAMWORK	___	___	___	___	___
CONFLICTS	___	___	___	___	___
POLITICAL MOVES	___	___	___	___	___
OUR ABILITY	___	___	___	___	___

(Please turn the page.)

EXERCISE 8

B. INTERPRETING THE RESPONSES (10 min)

It is no doubt clear that each statement is an ideal. If everyone in your group responded to each one with "strongly agree," you could package yourselves for exhibition at the Smithsonian, or consider that you were all living in a dream world. Probably, though, that wasn't the case. Read the following descriptions as a basis for the upcoming discussion:

AGREEMENT -- Responses to this statement will indicate the extent to which everyone understands and accepts the aims of the group. If there is disagreement, it will be difficult to make decisions about the use of time, energy, and resources.

CONTRIBUTIONS -- Underlying this statement is the idea that involvement in group tasks comes in part from feeling influential, that one's ideas are affecting group work. Without this sense of well-being, it is hard for most people to be productive.

WHAT IS NEEDED -- Responses will point to how well members grasp the notion that certain resources must be acquired for the school. Lacking such awareness means that no concentrated efforts on behalf of the school will be made by group members.

METHODS TO USE -- The extent to which your group discusses strategies and tactics is explored here. Even though only one or two people might go out and do the work, good ideas and connections can emerge from group discussion of how things are being done.

TEAMWORK -- The extent to which members feel that they are in something together, struggling for a common goal, and contributing what each can heightens the amount of energy brought to the task and cushions the despair that occurs from time to time.

CONFLICTS -- Responses point to how much energy your group gains or loses in handling disagreements. Energy drains occur when conflicts are smoothed over, but not resolved; solved by compromise, with no one feeling really satisfied; or arbitrarily dismissed, leaving everyone in frustration.

POLITICAL MOVES -- Responses indicate how good people feel about using other than rational persuasion tactics to get needed resources. Disagreement on methods can sabotage your united front.

OUR ABILITY -- The extent to which everyone believes the group can get what it needs has a strong impact on whether or not you are successful. If people think they can't, they're probably right.

As you look at the response tallies, you might find one or more of these patterns:

- Most people indicate "disagree" or "strongly disagree." This points to much energy going into unresolved process issues rather than into achieving group aims. The need for improving functioning is strong.
- There is a wide spread of responses from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." This may indicate some important issues that have to be addressed and corrected, as represented by the "disagree" responses. Some members are experiencing some problems, and to that extent, improvement is needed. Members answering "agree" may need to be convinced that there are issues.
- Most people indicate "not sure." Such a pattern shows the great amount of ambiguity felt by members and points to the need for improvement as a priority.
- Most respond with "agree" or "strongly agree." There are no apparent problems and the group functions well. But, look carefully at the examples given to be sure you really are on the same wave length and not just being rosily optimistic or unseeing.

C. DISCUSSING THE RESULTS (60-90 min)

Discuss the response data with the aim of understanding more clearly what members meant by their responses. This will help in assessing the extent of problems in your group's functioning.

The purpose of this discussion is to air everybody's responses and opinions about group functioning. Don't try to solve problems now. It is important that you establish a process for it. This is where most groups founder. Without realizing it, it is easy to get into

(Please turn the page.)

details of substance, which wastes time and will never be resolved because the process for working together isn't established. In your discussion, do this:

- Discuss each statement separately, and in turn.
- For each statement, analyze the examples given to illustrate the response. Are they accurate reflections of what happened?
- Describe the effects of those examples. How were they energizing, or draining?
- Allow enough time to discuss each statement and response thoroughly.
- Make sure that everyone participates in the discussion.
- Aim for everyone to understand everyone else's views.

When the discussion has ended, take a few moments to summarize your own impressions of it in terms of areas needing improvement and areas that are strong. Use the chart below.

OUR GROUP'S FUNCTIONING

– WEAK AREAS	+ STRONG AREAS

▶ IMPROVING GROUP STRENGTHS

Let's assume that you already understand and value the importance of building group trust. Your group feels united in its campaign to get what is needed for the school. Furthermore, the group believes in its right to go after what it needs; there are no qualms about throwing a few self-serving punches.

So what's wrong? Well, perhaps there's a feeling that the group needs to be more efficient, or to acquire more knowledge, or to have better connections. Maybe there's a sense of not being quite up to the task.

Here are two possibilities for improving group strengths:

- Upgrading members' skills
- Adding new people

Each area is treated briefly.

• UPGRADING MEMBERS' SKILLS.

Your group may have all of the raw material it needs but it lacks the means to draw it out. If you feel on the verge of doing great things but need a push over the hump, call in a consultant to help you out. Keep these five suggestions in mind:

1. Choose a consultant on the basis of what you need. Is it a group process problem that you need help with? Do you need expert advice on how to deal with a particular agency? Here are two examples:

> *The Arts Coop group initially did a lot of planning on paper accompanied by much rational thinking. The group was polite, somewhat passive, and slow moving.*
>
> *A consultant was hired. He helped the group to move from paperwork to direct action. He asked them to consider the resistance they would meet in the community, to surface that anticipated resistance, and to create mechanisms for handling it.*
>
> *The result was that the group assumed a problem-solving stance and united to meet resistance head-on.*

In the case of the second planning group:

The Cambium School planning group functioned well together but found that what they needed was some good tactical advice on how to approach a state agency for a seed grant.

This group selected a consultant with a strong reputation for grantsmanship techniques that worked. A one-day workshop was held in which the consultant conducted role-playing exercises, proposal writing classes, and discussions on key people, their concerns, issues to highlight, and deadlines.

The group then was able to plan a good proposal and follow it through successfully.

2. Negotiate with the consultant that you select on such topics as what your group needs, what you expect from the consultant, what the consultant can and cannot do, what the time and financial limitations are. Do this before the consultant begins working with the group.

3. Consultants are most effective at attacking a particular problem that you can help them to define. Examples are clarifying goals, improving group decision-making skills, planning strategies for presenting a proposal to the school board, or proposal writing.

4. Consultants with practical experience probably will be of more help to you in dealing with your environment than will theorists.

5. Give a good try at using the tools and suggestions that a consultant offers. If they don't seem to work, then either get clarification on their usage, if you're unsure, or discard them.

For a detailed treatment of choosing and using consultants, see GUIDE 1: SETTING THE STAGE FOR PLANNING.

Other means of working with the members you have are to educate yourselves in the ways that you define as needed by subscribing to appropriate journals, investigating other written materials or films, asking people with practical experience a few pertinent questions, and visiting other schools. Ask for free advice from people who have done what you're doing or are in the midst of it, but be careful --every situation is different.

- ADDING NEW PEOPLE.

It may well be that your group as presently composed lacks some needed skills, knowledge, or means of influencing key stakeholders.

Consider adding some new members to your group. Not only do you stand to gain satisfaction on the needs you have identified, but you'll profit from the spurt of new ideas and fresh approaches.

Here are three broad categories of selection when choosing new members.

1. POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

   It may relieve any feelings of helplessness or impotency in getting what you need from your environment if you invite one or more well-connected people to join your enterprise. Remember, though, that you take the risk of getting coopted yourself in the bargain because you'll in turn have to be responsive to the newcomer's concerns. (See Module 4 for more on this idea.) For example:

> *The Arts Coop planning group invited area principals to sit on their committee for planning a regional high school for the arts. In order to keep a balance, though, they were careful to pack the committee with enough people who were very favorable to the original concept and design of the school.*

2. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

   Good endorsements from the community can be extremely helpful. One way to get such support is to invite community representatives to join you. Two examples:

> *The Woodmont School planning group found that they had someone to do the technical tasks like proposal writing and conceptual thinking and there was*

another person or two to handle political tasks with the school district. What they really needed was a strong community person to stir up the neighborhood to support their struggle. They pulled in such a person and began mobilizing that arena of support.

The Cambium School planning group delegated a couple of members to work closely with some active, politically astute parents. This sub-group was charged with clearing aside the path from no school to opened school. The sub-group succeeded in getting favorable decisions from the school board, getting the superintendent to state his support for the school publicly, and beating back the attacks of a hostile principal.

3. TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Perhaps your group needs help with such tasks as writing proposals, drafting evaluation designs, hiring personnel for the school, choosing curriculum, or maintaining good public relations. Every community has lots of talented people. You have to pull them into your corner. Here are two examples:

The Arts Coop planning group reached the stage where they wanted to hire a director for their school. They invited a personnel manager to join them. He helped the group establish hiring criteria, write a job description, determine their priorities, and develop an interview guide and problem questions for candidates to handle.

The Cambium group decided to be very visible in their community because they needed a substantial amount of support in order to get funded by the school district. They convinced a public relations woman of the merit of their work. She published a small newsletter, put out regular press releases, *invited the press to the lottery for student selection, and formed a speakers bureau. All of these activities put the new school in a halo of good publicity that proved to be convincing.*

If you decide to bring on new members, keep these ideas in mind:

- Orient the new member to what your group is all about. One new school planner always gave a summary of the history of the planning group, when new members attended for the first time.
- Give the new member a clear description of the goals and design of the school.
- Be clear within your group as to why you want to add this new person and what expectations you all have for the new relationship.
- Be clear about how your group operates, e.g., makes decisions, sets agendas, assigns tasks, solves problems, etc.
- Indicate where you are in your planning and what still needs to be done before the school can open.
- Invite questions from the new member.

Exercise

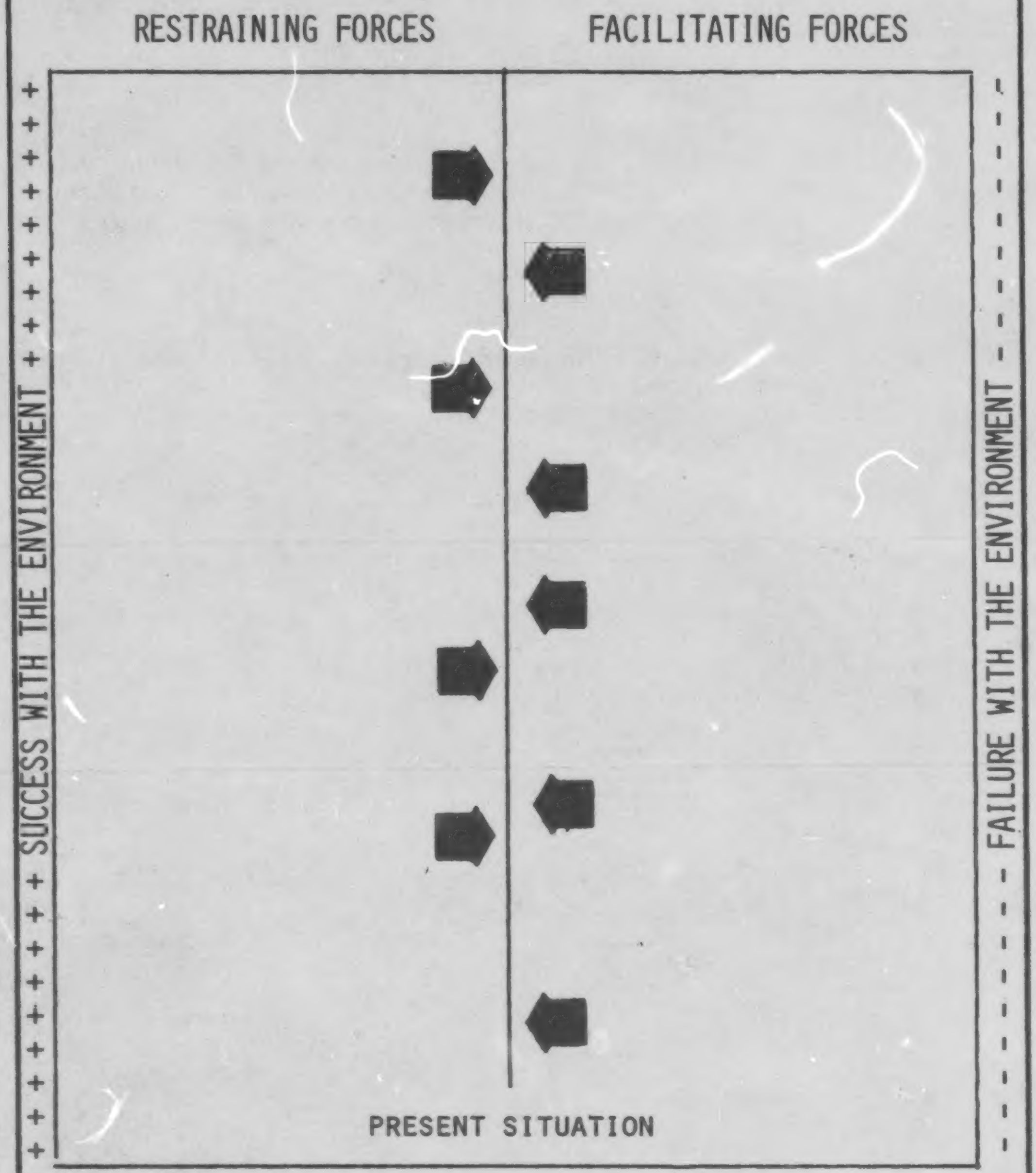
On the next page is "GROUP IMPROVEMENT PLAN," an exercise for you to do with your group in which you will complete a force field analysis and a group plan. The exercise can be done by an individual, though it may not be as effective.

First review this module (Module 2), taking special note of the responses to the Questioning exercise and of this last section entitled "Improving Group Strengths."

Keep both of these pieces in mind as you do the exercise. When you finish, you will have a list of your group's restraining and facilitating forces, as well as a plan to increase your probability for success.

GROUP IMPROVEMENT PLAN (45-60 min)

1. Working with your group, take out a newsprint pad and draw on it a force field, such as the one below:


RESTRAINING FORCES
FACILITATING FORCES
SUCCESS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT
FAILURE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT
PRESENT SITUATION

(Please turn the page.)

EXERCISE 9

2. On the left side, write in the restraining forces -- the group's weaknesses, fears, and problems with planning that can force you over to FAILURE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT.

3. On the right side, write in the facilitating forces -- the group's strengths, powers, and advantages in planning that can force you over to SUCCESS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT.

4. Now make a plan to increase the probability of success.

   HINT: Concentrate on ways to reduce restraining forces -- then the existing facilitating forces will operate more freely to push you toward success.

   As noted earlier:

   - Consider building upon what you have (existing inner resources of the group).
   - Consider cultivating outside resources to add to what you have.

5. Write your plan in the space below. Include:

   - Restraining forces that will be reduced, and facilitating forces that will be strengthened
   - Who will be involved
   - What will happen
   - How long it will take
   - What is the expected outcome

WHAT ABOUT PRESENTING A UNITED FRONT?

One of the problems encountered by the planning group described in "WHAT WENT WRONG?" (Exercise 6) centered on their own lack of clarity on what they were doing.

Their unsureness was evident to the parents. They disagreed with one another about the model they were developing. And finally, they simply had not prepared themselves for meeting with outsiders.

Whether your contacts with people outside of your group are individual or involve several or all members, there are some points to keep in mind and some preparations that will be helpful.

- STRIVE FOR SIMPLICITY.

You and your group are familiar with what you're doing. Assume that others are not. Organize your ideas in a simple, straightforward manner. Cover the main areas and give examples. If you are asked for more details, then provide them, but don't muddy the stream of your presentation by giving lots of details too early.

- AVOID USING JARGON.

Clear, concise language says the most. The use of jargon -- your group's special language -- sideswipes your attempt to communicate to other people who have not been thinking about your issues in your way.

- STRESS YOUR COMMON VISION.

Focus on those aspects of your plan for the new school that fit best with the interests and concerns of your audience. They will hook into what you're saying because they'll see something in it for themselves.

- NEVER ARGUE AMONG YOURSELVES IN PUBLIC.

Resolve your conflicts with one another before you meet with outsiders. In-group arguing destroys any illusions of strong cohesiveness. Your audience will lower its estimation of your group's ability to plan a good school.

- EXPRESS ENTHUSIASM.

Don't be shy about spreading enthusiasm. It not only gives outsiders a good feeling about what you're doing, but it also inspires them to want to help.

- PREPARE FOR MEETING WITH OUTSIDERS.

Whether you are meeting with the Board or with the Director of Equipment and Supplies, do the following beforehand:

- Find out their concerns and self-interests, if you can. If not, listen at the meeting.
- Set objectives for what you want to come out of the meeting and plan your strategy.
- Decide who in the planning group will be involved.
- Plan a general strategy -- how you will proceed.
- Engage in "what if" thinking by imaging what could go wrong.
- Invent ways to meet these possible difficulties -- ways to handle questions, comments, actions that are not favorable.
- Determine the next steps for people to take when the meeting ends.

- CRITIQUE THE MEETING WITH OUTSIDERS.

After the meeting, consider all that went on:

- What were the good things that happened?

- What were the bad things that happened?

- How could you improve the next time?

Exercise

On the next page is "MEETING CONDUCT," an exercise to give your group practice in preparing for a meeting by following the above suggestions. You will select a real meeting that you must have with your stakeholders and then prepare for it with a role play. This anticipation will help you to pre-invent ways to meet difficulties or to take advantage of favorable situations.

DO

MEETING CONDUCT

(35-45 min)

1. THE NEXT TIME YOU HAVE A MEETING SCHEDULED WITH SOME IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS, CONSIDER PREPARING FOR IT BY FOLLOWING THE SUGGESTIONS ON THE PRECEDING PAGE. IT IS BEST, THOUGH NOT ESSENTIAL, THAT YOU WORK WITH SEVERAL OTHERS, PARTICULARLY ON THE "WHAT IFS" AND THE INVENTING TASKS.

   A. Assign one or more group members to represent the planning group at the meeting.

   B. Assign one or more group members to play the role(s) of the stakeholders.

2. AT THE "MEETING":

   A. The players start with the material they have prepared, but should feel free to improvise if the situation merits it.

   B. Other group members observe the "meeting."

   C. Group members may switch roles if desired after playing out a round.

3. CRITIQUE THE MEETING BY:

   A. Having the players discuss what happened.

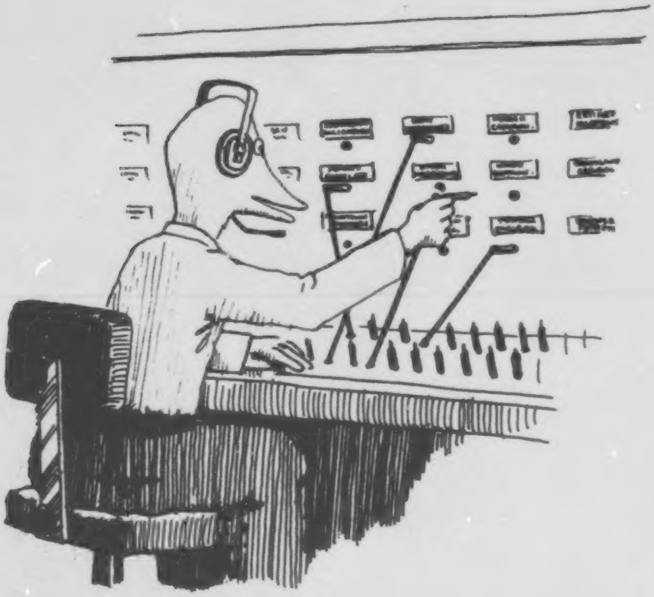
   B. Having the observers discuss what happened.

   C. Making a plan or set of guidelines for improvement before the real meeting.

EXERCISE 10

Module 3

Manage Your Contacts With The Environment



MANAGE YOUR CONTACTS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT 3

HOW VISIBLE SHOULD THE NEW SCHOOL BE? WHAT ARE THE ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT AND AVOIDANCE?

The question of how much and what kind of contact to have with the environment is tricky, yet central, to new-school planners. Because the planning group must get resources and build a system for a continued flow from the environment, successful contact -- links to the environment -- must be initiated.

But because the group is caught up in its own planning, design, and inner-group dynamics, there is understandable reluctance to muddy the waters with new, outside issues and constraints. The environment may overload or distract planners from their work. Planners need buffers too.

This dilemma and two forces that bear upon it are dealt with in this module:

- Vulnerability of the new school
- Visibility of the new school
- Environmental contact versus avoidance

VULNERABILITY OF THE NEW SCHOOL

Public schools in general are in a somewhat unusual, dual position: They are accountable to the public that supports them with taxes; but since they form something of a monopoly in education, they are exempt from market sanctions that could encourage improvement and adaptation to environmental changes.

Thus, on the one hand, they are quite vulnerable to the legitimate demands of the surrounding environment that supports them.

On the other hand, though, they are seemingly impervious to demands for change since they have a captive audience.

The effect of this relationship between schools and their environments on new schools in particular is altered. That is, new schools remain quite vulnerable (even more so than are established schools) and are not the least bit impervious. They don't yet have an audience.

Increased vulnerability derives from the fact that the new school has not yet been set in concrete, it is susceptible to shaping and influencing; whereas the older, established school has rigidified its patterns and routines. Getting it to move at all is an inordinate task not unlike moving a mountain.

New-school planners can find themselves:

- Having less control than they'd like over achieving their new-school goals
- Depending upon some resource or support from the larger system for its very survival
- Thus, they necessarily turn to the use of political strategies and tactics to get what they need

Of course, the boundary that separates the school (or the planning/implementation group) from its environment looks different according to which side of it one is standing.

- ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.

In the case of an established school, the people on the outside are parents, students, other community people. They see a very thick, impermeable boundary that maintains the control system with the school people and keeps the outsiders powerless.

From this point of view, any linking mechanisms a new-school planning group decides to create will probably be seen by concerned outsiders as a benefit -- a way for them to exert influence.

- ON THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT.

From this standpoint, the boundary looks thin and very easily permeated. Insiders feel vulnerable in their glass houses. Many defensive moves are undertaken to give them a sense of security: They protect themselves by having rules on when people can and can't visit the school, by holding their professional knowledge over the heads of outsiders, by maintaining control of types of programs available in the school, and so on.

New-school planners looking out at their environment may imagine gathering troops preparing for attack or a fishbowl existence in which every single decision they make is reviewed, criticized, and overturned. Their defenses against the system may seem weak indeed.

• ADVANTAGES OF CLOSED, IMPERMEABLE BOUNDARIES.

For new-school planners, the advantages of keeping to themselves and not admitting strangers to their group are:

- Opportunity to do own planning, designing, daydreaming without interference
- Freedom to distinguish selves as separate from outsiders and to identify the group's goals and concerns as paramount

• ADVANTAGES OF OPEN, PERMEABLE BOUNDARIES.

New-school planners gain in awareness of their environments by opening their boundaries and admitting new members or visitors:

- Sense of how their concepts and plans will fare in the larger system and community
- Knowledge of the external conditions to which the group will have to respond
- Sense of how to locate and get needed resources from the environment

HOW VISIBLE SHOULD THE NEW SCHOOL BE?

The very nature of a new, innovative school makes it (and the people who are planning it) visible to others in the environment. The new school is to be different in some ways and is to be an alternative to other district programs.

The larger system will watch the new school more closely and often will apply stricter standards to it than to the established, traditional schools. This differential application of standards often is used against new schools which the larger system perceives as a potential threat.

Sometimes the threat is disruption to the bureaucracy's routine channels and methods of doing business. If the bureaucracy makes an exception to the rule in this one instance, others may attempt to gain the same privilege and soon enough, the rule would be negated.

One planner of a radical, urban alternative high school reported:

> *The Board wouldn't allow our school to give a diploma at first because we weren't accredited. They pulled that out of a hat. It was a specious argument because in this city individual schools are not accredited. But according to them, ours was supposed to be.*

Another potential threat to the larger system is embodied in the typical innovative school-as-a-beacon-of-change notion. Beacons must be visible. But new schools also may need low visibility to protect the school before it is "set" in the bureaucratic structure. The instinct for survival being as strong as it is, new-school planners often have to give up temporarily their vision of developing a beacon school.

Generally, visibility is lower in a large bureaucratic school system, where there tend to be many departments carrying out functions that other sections know nothing about, and where there are many, many activities going on. You and your new school are not the only thing on their minds.

Visibility derives from many more factors than bureaucratic concerns. The larger community must be taken into account, and here there are costs and bond issues, community hopes or disaffections, past experiences with new or innovative schools, politics, and so on.

New-school planners must have their fingers on the pulse(s) of their community in order to gauge the effects of an all-out, high visibility campaign or the low-key, low profile. Some groups prefer low visibility until they're strong enough to survive and then they burst upon the scene. Other groups maintain that you can't be strong unless enough people know about you and what you're doing and then support your efforts.

Being clear about your reasons for visibility is very important -- is it just a wish for recognition, or something else?

ADVANTAGES OF LOW VISIBILITY

Planning and early start-up stages seem to benefit most from low visibility in the environment because:

- There is greater flexibility in planning made possible by little interference.
- It is possible to develop total concepts when there is little diversion by environmental demands.
- The group has the opportunity to strengthen itself and to investigate the environment before having to deal with it.

The Arts Coop planner used a low visibility strategy because early publicity would have locked her planning group into statements and actions before they were ready to close up their creative thinking.

Additionally, the group's early planning tasks wouldn't have made good publicity anyway. The group waited until they had to raise money for the school before "going public."

ADVANTAGES OF HIGH VISIBILITY

Usually high visibility is productive after the school has its niche in the bureaucratic structure and is engaged in:

- Building awareness in the community of this new and wonderful school
- Building a strong political base of support that has clout against the larger system that would try to eliminate the new school

> *The same planner who used the low visibility strategy in early stages encouraged the new school to do everything it could to be visible after opening. They managed to get the local newspaper to do a very positive spread in their Sunday section.*

The radical, urban alternative high school had to fight for its life and used a high visibility approach:

> *A huge conflict between the school and the district bureaucracy developed over the latter's refusal to renew a budget contract, thus endangering the future of the school. The school mobilized a major public campaign, and eventually the district relented, but only after reducing the amount of the allocation.*
>
> *Without the support of the community in this struggle, the school could have been wiped out.*

Many new, innovative schools, faced with more hospitable surroundings than was the school described above, mount massive public relations programs to keep themselves in the limelight (and therefore in the budget).

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT AND AVOIDANCE?

It is a given that a relationship will be created between the new school and its environment. If the school is to exist and grow in a positive way, the relationship must be positive from the beginning.

It is also a given that the more innovative the new school, the more difficult it will be to create a positive, friendly relationship. The word "innovative" is a warning signal for people who would rather keep things just the way they are.

Thus, we have the approach/avoidance dilemma experienced by most planning groups.

It is a sad and well-known fact that planning groups do not necessarily go out and act upon their environments. Usually it is the environments that act on them.

☞ ACT ON YOUR ENVIRONMENT OR IT WILL ACT ON YOU.

The issue of acting upon the environment versus avoiding or reacting to the environment is illustrated in the two examples below.

Both groups had reached their final planning stages, and both needed environmental support and endorsement. Each took a different tack.

Survival of the Arts Coop regional high school was thought to be precarious by its planners because its students were to be supported by special add-on funds from each of the six or seven participating school districts.

During the months before the school opened, the planners made a strong effort to build a broad base of support for the school. They met with the League of Women Voters and with each local board. They got *widespread, favorable coverage in local media. They also spoke persuasively with guidance counselors in each of the sending districts who agreed to serve as "gatekeepers" to enable students to attend the arts school.*

The second group was more in-group oriented:

As the final plans were taking shape for the new Lincoln Acres open space elementary school, a continuous stream of public meetings and letters to the editor of the local newspaper pointed to the strong community feeling against the plans.

Many citizens believed that the open space plans violated their understanding that there were to be self-contained classrooms available as an option. "We've been lied to, shafted," said several parents.

Despite the criticism, the faculty continued with their open space planning. In one planning session, the question of developing a structure for parent involvement was raised. The principal said, "No, we're not ready for them yet."

Under pressure from the Board, the principal and faculty agreed to collect opinion data from parents through a survey. But the results were largely ignored as planning continued.

At the peak of the conflict, the faculty went off for a previously planned "communications workshop" for themselves at a nearby Playboy Club. They did not consider postponing or rescheduling the workshop to a time or place which would not be so potentially inflammatory if it became known to the community (which it did).

▶ THE MOVE TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT

Planners and implementers tend to seek selective interaction with their environments because:

- They are committed to actualizing their plans and ensuring a place for the school in the bureaucracy.

- Substantial resources are needed since it is a whole school, not just a new program within an existing school.

- They must compete for a limited amount of resources with other schools in the district.

- Dealing with the bureaucratic constraints that will affect the new school requires them to enter the battle zone, even if their coping behavior is that of actively ignoring the constraints rather than attempting to alter or circumvent them.

▶ THE MOVE TOWARD ENVIRONMENTAL AVOIDANCE

When planners/implementers avoid interaction with their environments, it usually indicates that:

- A high level of uncertainty is causing them to close off their group boundaries.

- The sense of vulnerability that comes from trying to create an innovative, new school in a traditional, probably hostile setting is very strong.

- The tendency to avoid risks calls for taking a cautious, "let's wait and see" attitude.

- Internal group strength and commitment may depend upon the members' getting their act together before they venture any contact with their environment.

A graphic representation of the approach/avoidance dilemma appears on the next page.*

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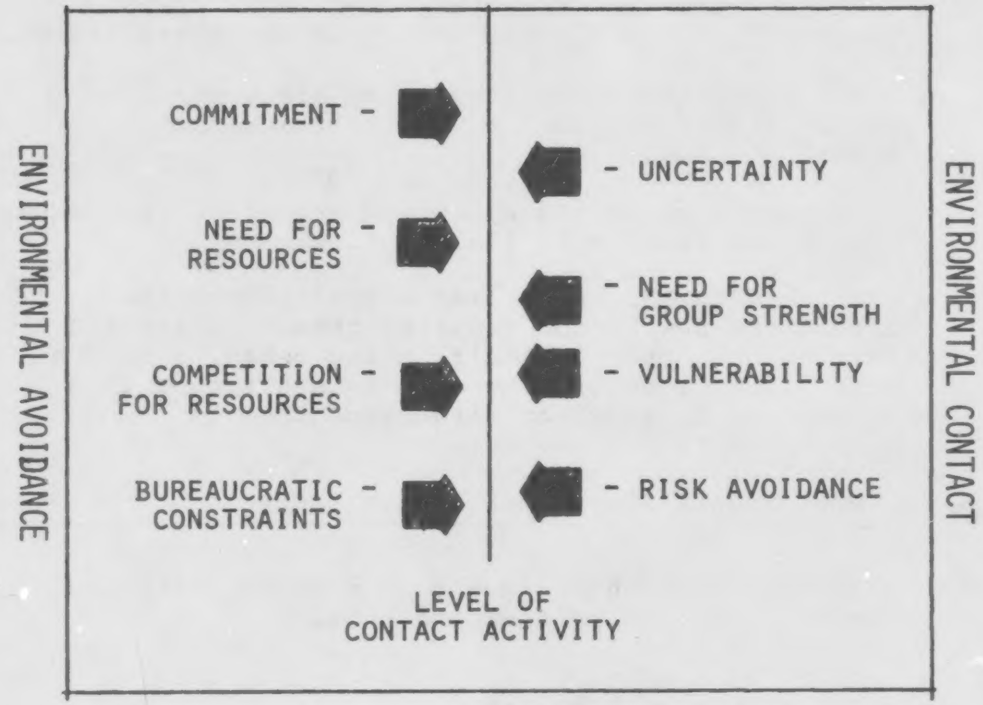
* From Miles, Sullivan, Gold, Sieber, and Wilder. Creating New Schools. New York: Center for Policy Research, Inc., 1978.


ENVIRONMENTAL AVOIDANCE
COMMITMENT -
NEED FOR RESOURCES -
COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES -
BUREAUCRATIC CONSTRAINTS -
- UNCERTAINTY
- NEED FOR GROUP STRENGTH
- VULNERABILITY
- RISK AVOIDANCE
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT
LEVEL OF CONTACT ACTIVITY

Notice that the stalemate that can be created by equal forces on both sides of the issue works to the advantage of an environmental avoidance outcome. That is, if the dilemma is felt strongly by the group as a real dilemma, they will be unable to do anything, the result of which will be environmental avoidance.

Note also that there is no value loading on environmental contact or avoidance. The particular situation's requirements determine the suitability of seeking or withdrawing from the environment. Oftentimes, though, planners/implementers don't get the choice.

Some pointers to keep in mind when there is a strong tendency, with little good reason, toward avoiding the environment are:

- WE ARE NEVER ENTIRELY READY.
- THE LONGER WE POSTPONE, THE TOUGHER IT GETS.
- BEGIN MODEST CONTACTS AS EARLY AS DAY 1. THE RULE: MODERATE RISK.

▶ MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTACT

Sometimes it is to your advantage to be highly visible in the environment and to open your boundaries to outsiders.

Sometimes it is better to have low visibility and to close your boundaries to others.

Note that:

- High visibility and closed boundaries make for more potential conflict.
- Low visibility may make it easier for the group to have open boundaries -- less is at stake.

You want to aim for deciding what is best for you and then following through on it. You won't gain much from letting others (outsiders) decide for you.

Neither will you profit from following rules about contact and avoidance. Rules generally limit you to looking at an issue in only one way, when there very well could be a different and better way.

Be wary of statements like:

- It's always better to be open and accessible to outsiders. Otherwise, they'll think we're up to something.
- Never include community people in your meetings. They don't understand what you're doing and they'll use your own information against you.
- It's better to go it alone. If you do everything right, it'll all turn out in the end.
- You should tell as many people as possible what you're doing with the new school. You never know when one of them might be able to help out.

Sometimes such statements are accurate and sometimes they're not. It depends on the particular situation, who's involved, and what the circumstances are.

Deciding what to do and when is your concern. Sometimes you'll make mistakes, as did the open space elementary school planners at Lincoln Acres when they continually kept their boundaries closed to community input, and then suffered reprisals.

Other times, you'll be successful as was another group planning an open school: They controlled every bit of information that went out of the group and were careful in the outside opinions they heeded. The strategy was successful for them because they already knew what would work with their larger environment, and what wouldn't.

YOU HAVE AS MUCH POWER AS PEOPLE THINK YOU DO. (AND WHEN YOU THINK OF IT, SO DO THEY.)

Exercise

On the next page is "WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?," a set of situations that could occur in any community. Even yours. Read the statements and write in your preferred strategies for dealing with these environmental contact/avoidance problems.

You may work alone or as a group. Finish with a discussion of each of the situations and your responses.

"WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?," gives you practice in thinking about and planning ways to deal with aspects of your environment.

DO

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?

(25-35 min)

Consider these situations in relation to your setting. Write your preferred strategies in the spaces provided. When you have finished, compare responses with each other.

1. A WOMAN WHOM YOU KNOW TO BE HOSTILE TO YOUR NEW-SCHOOL PLANNING ASKS TO BE INVITED TO YOUR NEXT MEETING.

2. YOU HAVE JUST COME ON BOARD AS PRINCIPAL AND IN THE MIDST OF HIRING STAFF AND BEGINNING TO PLAN THE PROGRAM, THE LOCAL PARENTS GROUP INSISTS THAT YOU SPEAK TO THEIR MEMBERSHIP ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING TO DO WITH THIS NEW SCHOOL.

3. YOUR GROUP HAS BEEN PLANNING THE NEW SCHOOL WHEN SUDDENLY YOU ARE TOLD BY THE SUPERINTENDENT THAT STUDENTS WILL HAVE TO PETITION THEIR PRINCIPALS FOR TRANSFER TO YOUR SCHOOL.

4. YOUR GROUP HASN'T BEEN PLANNING TOO LONG BEFORE THE LOCAL NEWS EDITOR CALLS TO SAY HE'D LIKE TO DO A BIG STORY ON THE NEW SCHOOL BECAUSE PEOPLE HAVE QUESTIONS.

EXERCISE 11

Module 4
Plan Strategies For Dealing With Your Environment

PLAN STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH YOUR ENVIRONMENT 4

WHAT ARE SOME EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS TO USE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT? HOW NECESSARY IS THE USE OF TACTICS?

A new school requires much nurturing during its first year of operation -- it must get off to a good start if it is to survive that first year (the most trying) and subsequent ones.

Getting the school off to a good start means -- during the early planning -- cornering resources and endorsements that are sufficient to support the new school.

Because there are limited resources, the new school will have to compete with other schools for financial support (an adequate budget), staff members, students, and loyalties within the bureaucracy and the larger community.

Successful competition and survival are aided by the use of good strategies. This module will discuss:

- Objectives of dealing with the environment
- Two stances in relation to the environment
- Effective strategies and tactics to use with the environment
- How necessary is the use of tactics

Successful strategies result in outcomes characterized by the mutual satisfaction of both the new school and its environment.

OBJECTIVES OF DEALING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Your overarching aim is to secure a place in the power structure for the new school. To do so means to assure the school of a continuing flow of the needed resources for its operation.

Successfully meeting two objectives will accomplish this overarching aim:

- Acquiring resources and support
- Managing constraints from the environment

Let's briefly examine these two objectives.

ACQUIRING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT.

Figure out what you need and where you can go to get it. Examples in three basic areas are money, in-kind contributions, and endorsements:

1. MONEY

- Planning or "seed" money for pre-operational expenses
- Money for summer workshops and inservice training
- Money for staffing the school
- Money for equipment, materials, supplies, renovations
- Money for special programs being planned that might not fit into routine budget lines

Consider obvious sources such as the school district, state or federal agencies (matching or challenge grants, planning money, or grants for starting special programs), private foundations.

Consider fund-raising activities for small amounts: Local banks; founders' matching funds group; benefit performances; newspaper advertisements with tear-offs for contributions; student fund raising; profit donations from one or two special showings at local movie theaters.

If you are a public school, your basic source will be the school district, so you will probably focus your energies there. Outside funds tend to dry up; they are best used for extra start-up needs or special one-shot deals (e.g., a summer workshop).

2. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Planners often blind themselves to resource availability by assuming that all resources must be paid for.* Some examples of in-kind contributions include:

- Student teachers or interns who can perform aide functions in return for supervision
- "Found" materials brought in by parents for art activities
- Teaching time donated by community volunteers
- Portion of a central office administrator's time explicitly given over to fund-raising efforts with foundations, state and federal agencies
- Documentation and feedback on the planning effort provided by an interested external researcher
- Consultation from an intermediate educational unit wanting to extend its services to school districts
- Slide show about the new school done as a class project by students from another school
- Unused duplicating machine traded by another principal for an extra overhead projector

3. ENDORSEMENTS

- Endorsements from people in the school district, such as the superintendent, assistant superintendent, budget officer, facilities director
- Endorsements from other principals in the district, with whom there will be natural competition for resources anyway
- Endorsements from the community, particularly parents and students who will be affected
- Endorsements from prominent members of the community whose support will attract others

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* Sarason, Seymour; Carroll, Charles; Maton, Kenneth; Cohen, Saul; and Lorentz, Elizabeth. Human Resources and Human Networks. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1977.

- MANAGING CONSTRAINTS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT.

Find out what constraints are likely to affect the new school and in what ways. As noted in Module 1, constraints can include:

- Standard operating procedures
- Legal regulations
- Budgetary restrictions
- Norms and values

These constraints may be strictly or loosely enforced, depending upon a number of factors including awareness of the enforcer, power of the enforcer, disposition of the enforcer towards the new school, and your managing efforts.

For example:

- It may be standard procedure that purchase requisitions be forwarded from Desk A to Desk B to Desk C to Desk D before approval is granted and action is taken. The effect upon you is DELAY of materials that you might have needed yesterday.

  You might manage this constraint by walking your requisition all the way through, or by getting support for your request that a new project needs a new procedure, at first.

- A law prevents private foundations from giving funds to tax-supported institutions (like public schools). You need a small grant for a workshop.

  You might manage this constraint by setting up a non-profit corporation to receive such money for you, or by enlisting the aid of a respected local civic organization which can receive and disburse tax-exempt dollars.

- A budget restriction may limit the amount of money you can spend on supplies. You need more.

  You might manage this constraint by "redefining" the needed item -- bolt the "supply" to the wall and call it "equipment," as one principal did.

- A district norm that the staff and principal make decisions about what goes on in the school. Your model calls for strong student participation in decision making.

> You might manage this constraint by calling your model a "learning community," avoiding attention to the power-sharing aspects, and writing in veto power for the principal, with the understanding that it would rarely if ever be exercised.

Acquiring resources and managing environmental constraints are your general objectives. How you accomplish them specifically depends upon your particular circumstances, the type of school, the planners and implementers, and the environment with which you are dealing.

▶ TWO STANCES IN RELATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT

There are two basic stances that a planning/implementation group might take in relation to its environment. One is acting upon its environment and the other is reacting to and adapting to the environment.

You might think of one as the WIND and the other as the WILLOW -- one acts and the other reacts. Briefly, they are:

• PROACTIVE STANCE -- THE WIND.

Attempting to shape the environment, to change it into something more accommodating to the new school is a proactive stance.

It is a direct, risk-taking, assertive, seeking-to-do-something approach. It is taking the initiative in seeking support from the environment. It is converting potential resources into actual power.

Examples include:

- Making bargains and negotiating agreements
- Collaborating with people and other organizations
- Coopting people
- Mounting a public relations campaign
- Coercing people

• ADAPTIVE STANCE -- THE WILLOW.

Accommodating to the demands of the environment, bending and absorbing as needed is an adaptive stance.

It is an indirect, protective, and reactive method that is carried out quietly and unobtrusively. It does not necessarily require the participation of people outside of the planning/implementation group except in terms of responding to or avoiding them.

Examples include:

- Buffering environmental threats
- Controlling the flow of information into and out of the planning/implementation group
- Circumventing rules and regulations
- Forecasting consequences of relations with segments of the environment
- Using feedback from previous encounters to influence future encounters

The labels "proactive" and "adaptive" are not exclusive of one another. That is, there are elements of both in each stance. For example, an attempt to coopt a person is not necessarily only assertive. It also is based upon a desire to adapt to that person's segment of the environment by allowing oneself to be influenced.

In the same way, buffering is partially an example of assertion -- because while you are protecting your boundary you are at the same time stating the terms of your interactions with the outside environment.

It is possible to be the wind and the willow at the same time. It all depends upon whom you're dealing with and which type of strategy you have selected.

WHAT ARE SOME EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS TO USE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT?

Four strategies, and tactics for each, are discussed in this section. They include:

- Cooptation
- Bargaining
- Circumvention
- Buffering

A fifth strategy, coercion, is not included. While this strategy was used extensively and successfully during the 1960's, it is not as effective today. Pressuring people alienates them unnecessarily, and distracts attention from the real issue: Your school needs their support and endorsement. You and your school can do without the ill feeling that often accompanies the use of coercion.

The four strategies discussed here are to be used in dealing with your environment in order to get what you want. These strategies are proactive (direct action) or adaptive (indirect, reactive) in nature and constitute ways to approach your environment.

What you do when you're in the midst of dealing with people in your environment will be helped by knowing some tactics that are effective in working with people in the school district offices and in the larger community. Each tactic is discussed after the presentation of the major strategy with which it is associated.

As you read through the various tactics and examples, think of them in terms of your own situation:

- How effective might they be in your setting?
- How comfortable would you feel in carrying them out?
- How acceptable would they be to other members of your planning group?

Consider also that to select one strategy and its tactics is not to restrict use of other strategies and tactics. In fact, implementing one often requires the use of others to make it all work together.

COOPTATION STRATEGY

This proactive strategy is a means of getting support from people or groups in the school's environment. There are two types: classical and advocate cooptation. They are each discussed below.

- CLASSICAL COOPTATION* -- the process of absorbing environmental elements into the leadership of the group in order to avert threats to the existence of the group/new school and in order to benefit from resources that might be made available by the outside elements.

  The other side of the coin is that the group gives up a certain amount of its own autonomy by allowing itself to be influenced by the outside elements who get a piece of the decision-making action.

  For example:

The planner of Appelbaum, a high school specializing in business education, contacted members of an influential business owners group and systematically developed good relationships with them.

She invited them to identify important areas of curriculum, particular business skills, and types of equipment that students should be adept at using. She allowed her program decisions to be influenced by their suggestions.

Members of the business owners group became "coopted" as was tangibly evidenced by their providing the planner with professional resources (one member prepared the budget for submission to the school board), connections with other business leaders in the community, funds to hire a consultant, and promises of assorted equipment for the school.

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* Definition from Philip Selznick, "Cooptation," Complex Organizations and Their Environments, Ed. M.B. Brinkerhoff and P.R. Kunz. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, Publishers, 1972, 141-151.

Classical cooptation emphasizes building support and cooling out potential opposition by incorporating necessary environmental elements into the planning circle.

It can come from a sincere desire to get community representation, or a method for preventing such participation by giving the illusion that the coopted group or person is influencing decisions.

And the coopted element can vary support from lip-service commitment to real investment in the planning effort.

- ADVOCATE COOPTATION -- the process of absorbing supporters from school district offices and other environmental organizations into the spirit of your enterprise.

  These advocates don't get decision-making powers in your planning effort, although their ideas may very well have an influence upon yours. They get "coopted" because they want to help an educational innovation get underway, or because they like you and want to help you.

  Generally, these advocates are middle management people, although sometimes they turn out to be top decision makers. Most often, though, they have less power than the stakeholders whose support will guarantee survival of the new school, but they can be extremely helpful, particularly with circumvention efforts.

  For example:

The director of an alternative public high school had an assistant whose prime responsibility was to develop good relations with people at the school district bureaucracy.

She became friends with the number 3 person in the Personnel Office. Some of the benefits that accrued were:

- *Hiring teachers for the school when there were district freezes on positions*
- *Getting licenses for some of their teachers*
- *Obtaining waivers which permitted converting elementary school licenses to high school licenses.*

Advocate cooptation happens mostly because:

- People want to help a good thing along
- People value a friendly relationship with you
- People want to exhibit their power in the system

☞ COOPT, OR BE COOPTED.

The strength of the COOPTATION STRATEGY is its gathering up into a strong base of support numerous people/organizations who will back you and help you out when necessary.

- COOPTATION TACTICS.

The tactics of CLASSICAL COOPTATION call for you to concentrate on:

- Building trust and establishing your credibility
- Learning others' motives, attitudes, and expectations
- Emphasizing mutual dependence and common vision
- Demonstrating respect and appreciation of others
- Sharing and using each other's resources and connections
- Creating a network of allies by involving mutual associates
- Minimizing differences between your concerns
- Eliminating others' perception of you as a threat
- Refraining from such harmful actions as annoying, embarrassing, or inconveniencing others
- Recognizing areas of potential conflict and diluting them beforehand

ADVOCATE COOPTATION tactics would include these added efforts in your interactions with school district offices:

- Dealing with middle management -- those with the responsibility of approving vouchers and moving papers from one desk to another

- Getting to know people in every office that is essential to your operation

- Walking all things to the right office -- things won't get lost and you get to know people at the same time

- Going through the same people as often as possible

The aim of all of these tactics is to create associations characterized by feelings of safety, friendship, and goal compatibility.

For example:

A planner/director of an urban alternative high school said that he was able to convert his superintendent from a passive, neutral person into an active supporter by being very careful of the image he created and the information that flowed out from the school.

His tactics were:

- *Matched goals* -- *He found out what the superintendent's goals were and then wrote the new school goals in terms of them. The reality didn't really match what was on paper.*

- *Never bothered him* -- *He never filed complaints and always worked through an assistant in the office. Once the superintendent "turned the corner" and became a real supporter, the tactic was changed to going to him for advice and maintaining friendly relations.*

- *Immediate response* -- *Whenever the superintendent asked him to do anything, the planner/director responded to the request immediately.*

- *Staged shows* -- *When the superintendent was planning a visit to the school, the planner/director would try to arrange it for a busy time, so that there would be enough kids there (attendance is a critical factor in this school district) and he would make sure that everybody was doing things that were in harmony with the known goals and interests of the superintendent.*

- *Invitations* -- *He invited the superintendent to come for a visit when he knew that the school couldn't help but look good, such as graduation day.*

- *Personal appearance* -- *Because the superintendent valued business-like attire, the planner-director always wore a coat and tie (so did his staff) when they were meeting with the superintendent, and no one smoked.*

Once the superintendent became a supporter of the new school, its staff were able to relax their guard and tell him what was really going on.

Was the image-making used by this planner/director detrimental to the health of the later relationship with the superintendent once he found out the truth? No, because in actuality, nothing that awful was being done, other than bending or ignoring some oppressive regulations.

☞ YOUR AIM IS TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL, EVEN IF IT MEANS "GIVING" ON LESS IMPORTANT POINTS.

▶ BARGAINING STRATEGY

This proactive strategy is essentially a trade between you and someone else. You both agree to exchange goods or services by negotiating a bargain.

Before you go into a bargaining session, it is imperative that you clarify:

- Your own target outcome
- Your own acceptable outcome
- Your own unacceptable outcome

Which is to say: You know what you want, you know what you'll settle for, and you know what you'll have no part of, before you negotiate with the other person or group.

There's nothing wrong with asking for more in order to be able to back down to what you really want. The American Federation of Teachers, for example, has been known to enter its bargaining sessions with some 600 demands of teachers in all districts.

Be sure that your first demand is all (and no more than) the facts can possibly allow. Otherwise, you'll lose credibility.

It is also important that you go into a bargaining session with an awareness of what you expect will be the positions and arguments of the other person. You will be in a better position to counter them.

An example of a bargain that was struck is:

> *The principal of an urban high school wanted some leeway to hire teachers of her own choosing, but AFT regulations permitted her to choose only one third. The rest would have to be teachers with seniority who would be transferred from other schools.*
>
> *The principal also wanted teachers with commitment and personal interest in the new program, teachers who would be willing to go beyond the five-hour day and bring extra energy to the task. She didn't think that transferred teachers would be likely to fit that need.*
>
> *She bargained for and got a variance on the regulation by making a deal: In return for a 50 percent choice of teachers, she would give teachers four periods of teaching and one at the resource center (usually equivalent to a rest period).*

☞ BARGAINING IS COMPROMISING, AND NOT EVERY SITUATION HAS A WINNER AND A LOSER. AFTER GOOD BARGAINING, BOTH SIDES FEEL THEY'VE GAINED.

- BARGAINING TACTICS.

Tactics of bargaining include close attention in such areas as:

- Gathering facts that apply to the situation
- Demonstrating that you have some clout
- Negotiating from a position of strength
- Looking at how people perceive the issues, not at the content of the issues
- Representing your constituents fairly
- Making your first demands as high as possible (without being totally ridiculous)
- Compromising without selling out
- Presenting yourself as being "responsible" to a third party so that control is out of your hands and action is irreversible
- Demonstrating your ability to back up your threats (and doing so if necessary to protect your credibility in future negotiations)
- Making contracts with built-in penalties for violators
- Determining other's position without revealing your own weaknesses or strengths

Here's an example of a bargain that was negotiated:

The telephone company wished to build an equipment center on a site located next to the projected site of a new high school. The company's plans for the center did not meet building regulations for that area because there were to be too many stories.

The new school was to be financed by the Educational Construction Division, but limited funds were available and many corners were being cut.

In joint negotiations between the telephone company, the city planners, representatives of the Education

Construction Division, and the new school's planners, the following deal was made:

- *The equipment center would be built according to the original plans and would abut the new school.*
- *The telephone company would be exempt from taxes levied because of the building's height.*
- *The telephone company would finance an elaborate floating recreation dock in the nearby river.*
- *The new school would be built without outdoor physical education facilities and would use the floating recreation dock.*
- *The telephone company would buy the air rights of the school, which was to be only seven stories tall.*
- *The sale of the air rights met the costs of the bonds which then would be issued to finance the school's construction.*

Bargaining tactics perhaps are used more often in dealing with the teachers union and its regulations, the district office and its requirements, and other principals or teachers in trading equipment and materials.

Sometimes you will have to have a formal contract drawn up to prevent violations. Other times a verbal agreement will suffice. It all depends upon the stakes involved.

TRY TO FIND LOOPHOLES. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING YOU HAVE THAT SOMEBODY ELSE WANTS AND YOU DON'T NEED, OR CAN SHARE.

CIRCUMVENTION STRATEGY

This adaptive strategy accepts the existence of a rule or regulation -- there is no attempt to change it -- but in effect, seeks to avoid the constraints imposed by adhering to it.

Circumventing a rule is getting around it, which has the additional effect of preserving it. The larger institution is not under any pressure to change its procedures because no one is making a fuss about it.

Planners' reasons for circumventing regulations are:

- Not wanting to spend the time and energy in trying to get the rule changed
- Not having the necessary strong connections in the larger environment to have much success in getting the rule changed
- Not wanting the increased visibility and negative regard of district offices as a result of challenging their regulations
- Not wishing to compromise the vision of the school by adhering to regulations that are antithetical to its educational values
- Not wanting to disregard or lose sight of the new school's purposes for the sake of regulations that are perceived as meaningless

For example:

An urban elementary school used volunteers and graduate students to operate its arts program (the core of the school) in violation of the constraint requiring that there be a certified teacher in every room. Budget and union restrictions about allocation of personnel prevented the school from obeying the regulation.

The planners circumvented the constraint by leaving the door open and having a licensed teacher across the hall. Technically, it was considered one space.

Using a circumvention strategy requires knowing the rules (without asking directly), knowing how to bend them, and knowing the consequences of discovery. You will find many people inside the system who agree with you and will help you.

☞ YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO GO BY THE RULES. JUST BE SURE YOU KNOW THE COSTS OF BREAKING THEM.

- CIRCUMVENTION TACTICS.

There are three main tactics of circumvention: Ignoring the directives, concealment, and creative resistance. Each is described and illustrated below.

- IGNORING THE DIRECTIVES -- One response to a demand by the larger system that the new school do something which is inconsistent with its priorities and vision is simply not to do it -- and pretend never to have known anything about it.

  For example:

An obstacle imposed by the school district upon its schools was the demand for frequent administrations of standardized tests. Administering the tests was time consuming and left little time for more pressing priorities, as defined by the new-school planners. Besides, they felt that giving the tests undermined the very changes that their new school was trying to effect. The planner/director said:

> *They'd send us tests. We'd throw them out. When asked about them, we'd say, "What tests? We never got them." We ignored the city-wide testing. It wasn't consonant with our goals.*

There was little or no follow-up beyond the reply that the school had never received the tests. With tests that the new-school people knew were absolutely required, they administered them.

The planner/director added that once they tried the straight route by refusing explicitly to give a test. They wrote a letter to the school district office in which they explained in detail that the test was not in line with their goals. They received a reply with an equally justified rationale for why the school had to give the test. The planner/director said, "That was the only time we ever tried that route."

☞ NEVER ASK THE BUREAUCRACY SOMETHING IF YOU THINK THE ANSWER MIGHT BE "NO."

Why not? Once you get a flat NO, any action you then take will be clearly and explicitly against the rules.

- CONCEALMENT -- A successful, progressive metropolitan principal was asked how he managed to get away with implementing such interesting and innovative programs in his school. He replied, "I just don't tell the district office what I'm doing."

  This concealment tactic is used heavily and it is often the enabling factor that permits new schools to carry out their innovative plans (often perceived as threatening by some people) with minimal interference.

  An example of this tactic in action:

A Board regulation stipulated that there were to be no summer schools that year due to financial difficulties in the district.

The principal of a school felt that a summer school was absolutely essential to her new operation. Throughout the year she submitted vouchers for the services of a guidance counselor, who was supposedly giving after-school assistance to students.

The money was saved up and used instead to run the summer school.

The concealment tactic is a risky one. You should believe strongly in the value of what you're doing before you consider using it.

- CREATIVE RESISTANCE -- Sometimes trying to conceal a circumventive action is less efficient and safe than appearing to obey the regulation officially while disregarding its spirit secretly.

  For example:

A state requirement that the director of the innovative regional arts program must have administrative certification was considered less important to the planning group than that the director be committed to the arts and to the education of talented children.

The planners circumvented the constraint by developing a special organization chart for the arts program. The chart placed the director of the regional educational agency, which coordinated the new-school planning, at the apex of the decision-making structure. Thus, the "director" could be said to be certified.

It worked.

WORK AT THE OUTER LIMITS OF YOUR AUTHORITY, AND YOUR AUTHORITY GROWS. THIS APPROACH EQUALS MODERATE RISK.

With circumvention tactics, it is imperative that you have a lot of information about your environment and what constraints are likely to be enforced. You must know what to expect.

▶ BUFFERING STRATEGY

This adaptive strategy seeks to draw a heavier line around the planners/implementers and the new school for reasons of protection from environmental threats.

By defining the boundary between inside and outside, the planner/implementer controls access across it.

A prime way to accomplish this aim is to monitor information about the program and the people that goes across the boundary. Such information is released carefully and most often to trusted receivers.

For example:

One planning group made certain that the local newspaper reporters were committed to truth reporting, not to sensationalism, before requesting coverage of their plans and progress with the new school.

Another method that was used successfully occurred in a district where a new open space elementary school had opened:

Parents in the Westgate district were beginning to grumble and soon demanded information about open education and what it meant for their children. They insisted on a parents night meeting at which a speaker would outline the program and parents would have a question and answer session.

The principal feared a mass uprising if such a large meeting were scheduled. He agreed to the meeting but arranged it so that as soon as the speaker had concluded his talk and had answered perhaps one question, the large number of parents were split into small "homeroom" groups. Each small group convened with a teacher in a setting that spoke more of dealing with parents' specific questions over cake and coffee than it did of rebellion.

The dissatisfied parents who had pushed for this meeting lost their support and were effectively defused by the buffering principal.

The buffering strategy comes into play when the new school is fairly visible, is somewhat endangered, and needs protection until a stronger base of support has been established.

☞ AN OUNCE OF PROTECTION IS WORTH A POUND OF REPAIR.

- BUFFERING TACTICS.

The tactics of buffering include activities such as the following:

- Diluting the power of environmental segments by keeping them separate from one another when you meet with them
- Absorbing environmental flak in order to protect the main operators of the school
- Defusing environmental dissatisfaction by listening, responding to people's right to their opinions, and promising to discuss the issues with other participants
- Stalling for time (people tend to lose their ferocity with the passage of time)
- Setting up an advisory committee of the dissidents and listening to their advice

  NOTE: This tactic might be combined with an attempt to coopt one of the dissidents by inclusion in your meetings. This tactic is tricky and must be handled very delicately. Otherwise, you'll succeed in fanning the fire.
- Anticipating and warding off problems before they become too troublesome
- Developing many options for environmental segments to consider (this allows you to establish the boundaries -- the options should be either all reasonably acceptable to you or stated in such a way that the ones you dislike will be disliked by the outsiders as well)
- Keeping your options open until you decide which one(s) to go with

Here is an example:

The planners of the Westgate district-wide move to open education that involved the creation of two new elementary schools decided that district rezoning was needed in order to have equal numbers of students in each school.

Their first proposal for rezoning at an open Board meeting was met with community disapproval.

They decided to develop several different rezoning proposals for the Board to choose from. They came up with 16 different ones. The one that they themselves favored was softened with the addition of two clauses: Students living within a certain distance of their present school would not have to transfer; and students entering the sixth grade, as well as their siblings, would not have to transfer to a different school.

The Board approved the rezoning proposal favored by the planners (which, by the way, was the one presented originally) with a minor change that was not considered important in the planners' projections.

☞ USING BUFFERING TACTICS REQUIRES A GOOD AMOUNT OF ASSERTIVE, AS WELL AS FRIENDLY, PERSUASION.

Exercise

Beginning on the next page is "WHAT'LL THEY THINK OF NEXT?," an exercise consisting of a series of newspaper articles reporting on the state of affairs of a real planning group, their new school, and the issues they faced in dealing with their environment. Each page presents one article and some questions for you to answer about it.

"WHAT'LL THEY THINK OF NEXT?" gives you practice in thinking through various strategies and tactics as you read about the experiences of a new-school planning group.

The exercise may be done individually. There is one rule:

- DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS. EACH PAGE DEALS WITH A NEW DEVELOPMENT.

The exercise requires approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.

WHAT'LL THEY THINK OF NEXT?

(30-45 min)

THE LINCOLN LOG

FINAL

All the news that fits, we print

Sunny Today
Cloudy Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 Lincoln, Monday, June 23, 1979 Price: 20 cents

Parents Fight Back!

It was learned today that the partitions for the Lincoln Acres Elementary School, to be opened this September, were delivered to Oxford School.

Parents are anxious that the partitions will not be replaced and that the self-contained classrooms presented in the bond issue literature will not be available as an option to the open space program being planned for Lincoln Acres.

Superintendent Biddle promised parents that "sone type of partitions will be used in the school."

Meantime, Barbara Collins, a resident of Lincoln Acres, has begun circulating a petition calling for one four-walled classroom for each grade level in the new school. Collins said, "We want a traditional classroom which stresses the basics and discipline."

She has already collected 153 signatures from Lincoln Acres residents and plans to present the petition to the Board at its next meeting with a demand for action.

Lincoln Acres faculty are continuing to plan an open space program. Principal Ellis Brown has said that the teachers are "extremely invested in their planning work and are totally committed to open education that works." He added that open education is flexible enough to accommodate any child with any special learning needs.

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE PROBLEM UNFOLDING HERE?

2. WHAT TACTICS MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE FOR THE PLANNERS TO USE?

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE PLANNERS DID ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

(Please turn the page.) EXERCISE 12

THE LINCOLN LOG

FINAL

All the news that fits, we print

Cloudy Today
Sunny Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 | Lincoln, Monday, July 14, 1979 | Price: 20 cents

Parents Say Supt. Lied! Demand Action Now

A hot debate at last night's school board meeting resulted in the decision that Principal Ellis Brown must conduct a community survey on parent attitudes towards the soon-to-open Lincoln Acres Elementary School.

A number of residents made statements regarding their dissatisfaction, and a petition with 178 signatures was presented in opposition to the overall open space program that is to be used in the fall.

Resident Rob Goldman said, "The Superintendent's credibility is at stake. He promised floor-to-ceiling partitions that would be nailed to the floor and could be removed in a weekend. That's why the Jaycees supported the school bond issue....Parents are getting an open space program they don't want shoved down their throats."

Superintendent Biddle stated that neither he nor any other school official had ever stated specifically what kind of partitions would be placed in the new school. He added that it was possible to create space with partitions of furniture and bulletin boards.

Barbara Collins asked, "What's happened to the bond issue promises? We were lied to!"

Brown told the Board that his teachers would decide where the partitions would go after consulting with parents and assessing student needs.

School board member Charles Frisch proposed that Brown conduct the parent survey as soon as possible so that the Board could decide by August 1 if the educational program of Lincoln Acres School should be changed.

1. WHAT ARE SOME PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF BROWN'S CONDUCTING THE SURVEY?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE BROWN TO DO IN THIS SITUATION?

(Please go to the next page.)

THE LINCOLN LOG

All the news that fits, we print

FINAL

Sunny Today
Cloudy Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 | Lincoln, Monday, July 28, 1979 | Price: 20 cents

Board Makes Public Faculty's Protest Letter

In an unusual move today the Board revealed the contents of a private letter written to them by Lincoln Acres faculty protesting the parent survey they were recently required to conduct in conjunction with parent volunteers.

The letter stated, in part: "We feel that the Board has shirked its responsibility by not taking a definitive stand and by failing to support its staff. By conducting a survey at this time, you are continuing to generate dissent toward the proposed school program."

The Board reacted unfavorably to the letter. Member Estelle Hunter told The Log: "I'm incensed. I think the teachers are paying lip service to the idea of individual differences and the need for alternatives....This is the most horrendous thing that's ever happened here."

Board member Dana Peabody said, "If a closed situation hampers their teaching ability, then perhaps they should find other jobs."

Recently elected member Terry Grivaldi added: "If that's their reaction to listening to parents, I do not believe that Mr. Brown ever intended to listen to parents."

Brown and his faculty were unavailable for comment. They are attending a planning workshop at an undisclosed location.

The Board has denied the faculty's request for a private session to discuss the new school. Peabody stated that "this is not a private issue. That meeting will be open." It's scheduled for their next session.

1. THE LETTER WAS NOT A GOOD TACTIC. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MORE EFFECTIVE COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE FACULTY PLANNERS TO FOLLOW?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU ADVISE THEM TO DO NOW?

(Please turn to next page.)

THE LINCOLN LOG

FINAL

All the news that fits, we print

Cloudy Today
Sunny Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 Lincoln, Monday, August 4, 1979 Price: 20 cents

School Staff Meets At Playboy Club

The Log learned today that the faculty and principal of the Lincoln Acres School held their planning workshop at the Playboy Club in Tacksville.

Superintendent Biddle stated that "the Playboy Club was the best and most reasonably priced of the facilities available" and added that the residential planning workshop was an aid in planning for the new school.

Board members Peabody and Frisch claimed no knowledge of the workshop and said they would not have given approval of the site had they known.

Other Board members were out of town and couldn't be reached for comment.

A spokesperson for the faculty in question stated that the workshop had been a great success and that its location was of secondary importance.

The location was not a well-kept secret. The Log editorial office received a number of telephone inquiries from Lincoln Acres residents about the workshop. Several callers indicated that they had complained to Superintendent Biddle about the site but had met with little response.

It was only then that The Log began its investigation.

1. WHAT EFFECT (IF ANY) DO YOU THINK THIS ARTICLE HAD UPON THE EFFORTS OF THE FACULTY/PLANNERS TO KEEP THEIR SCHOOL "OPEN"?

2. IF YOU HAD BEEN THERE AT THE TIME, WOULD YOU HAVE ADVISED THEM TO GO AHEAD WITH THEIR PLANS FOR THE WORKSHOP OR TO RE-ARRANGE? WHY?

3. DO YOU THINK THE PLANNERS SHOULD DO ANYTHING NOW?

(Please go to next page.)

THE LINCOLN LOG

FINAL

All the news that fits, we print

Sunny Today
Cloudy Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 Lincoln, Monday, September 8, 1979 Price: 20 cents

Parents Try To Close School

Parents working as volunteer school aides in the Lincoln Acres School, which just opened its doors this fall, are stronger than ever in their resolve to close it up by adding more walls.

Principal Ellis Brown said that he was mystified by their petitioning the Board for more walls. "My staff and I made every compromise that we could and still be able to keep to our ideals of open education. We put up partitions that we can't move around, we reduced our multi-age grouping plan from three grades per team to only two. We even invited parents to work as aides so that they could see how well the open space concept works. Any more walls will make us like any other self-contained classroom school."

Over 90 parents had volunteered to work as aides in the school and they came regularly. Mary Bowser, spokesperson for the parent group filing the petition and a regular volunteer aide in the school, said: "We had the chance to see first-hand how bad open education really is. It's worse than what we even imagined it would be."

Many parents are claiming mismanagement at the school, lack of concern for children's individual learning, much noise, and chaos.

Parents plan to meet with the Board at the session next week to present their demands.

1. WHAT STRATEGIES AND TACTICS DID THE PRINCIPAL AND STAFF OF THE NEW SCHOOL EMPLOY?

2. WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WEREN'T SUCCESSFUL IN USING THEM?

3. WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY WILL DO NEXT?

(Please turn to next page.)

THE LINCOLN LOG

All the news that fits, we print

FINAL

Sunny Today
Cloudy Tomorrow

Vol. 73, No. 5 Lincoln, Monday, September 23, 1979 Price: 20 cents

TEACHERS BAR PARENTS FROM SCHOOL!

THIS IS NOT THE END OF THE LINCOLN ACRES STORY, BUT IT IS THE END OF OUR TREATMENT OF IT. THE NEXT STEPS IN THE SAGA AT LINCOLN ACRES INVOLVED A TOTAL REORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL, THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRINCIPAL, AND MOVEMENT TOWARD A TRADITIONAL PROGRAM.

1. WHAT STRATEGIC ERRORS DID THE PRINCIPAL AND THE FACULTY/PLANNERS MAKE?

2. WHAT WOULD YOU DO NEXT IF YOU WERE THE NEW PRINCIPAL?

HOW NECESSARY IS THE USE OF TACTICS?

The chief characteristic of the new school's environment which makes the use of tactics necessary is the fact that outside organizations (the central school district offices or groups in the larger community) usually have different goals which they think the new school should achieve.

The new school is vulnerable to these external forces since it must be involved with them in efforts to acquire needed resources and endorsements.

When is the use of particular tactics likely to be successful? If you can answer "yes" to the following questions, you should consider using tactics when you have to:

- Can you find a way to get outsiders to do things for you? (COOPTATION)
- Can you make a deal with them? (BARGAINING)
- Can you afford to ignore them? (CIRCUMVENTION)
- Can you afford to stall them? (BUFFERING)

Many planners seem to be fairly successful in their tactical work, or at least their failures seldom come to light. The severity of repercussion depends both on the nature of the original tactics used and the visibility of the failure.

Successful COOPTATION requires at least some genuine benefits for outsiders joining you in your efforts. Without losing sight of your own goals, you must try to mesh yours with the goals of the people that you try to coopt. The danger is that your tactics may turn out to coopt you as much as those whom you are trying to coopt.

BARGAINING usually requires a candid acknowledgement (or existing institutionalized mechanisms) that state at the outset: We are here to give and to get. But, with a bargaining approach, you may come out on the short end.

CIRCUMVENTION requires the cloak of inconspicuousness, or at least, low visibility, since it is extremely difficult to carry out circumventive actions if attention is focused upon you. More than any of the other tactics, circumvention requires attention to the nature of the constraints themselves, understanding of formal organizations and communities, purposeful planning and careful action, a good intuitive sense, and a feel for what will be politically safe and expedient.

In answer to the question, "When do you use circumvention?" a skillful planner and circumventer replied, "Only when I have to."

The success of BUFFERING tactics requires that you have the legitimate right to impose certain buffers -- and that stalling, delaying, or protecting in other ways will not boomerang and arouse more ire from the environment. Buffering tactics must usually be seen as "reasonable," otherwise they can focus the opposition and cause it to mobilize against you.

You can reduce your risks by careful consideration of such questions as:

- What are the probable costs of using these tactics?
- What are the payoffs?
- Do the payoffs outweigh the costs?

Exercise

Beginning on the next page is "BE A HIRED HAND," an exercise that puts you in the role of consultant to your group and asks a number of questions on what is needed for dealing with the environment. It is best done individually, though this is not essential. Sharing your work with each other afterward is encouraged as a way of enlarging your pool of ideas.

Before you start to answer the questions, choose with your group a real problem that you all can focus on. Have someone keep track of time as you work, so that you'll have an opportunity to share ideas at the end.

Completing "BE A HIRED HAND" provides practice in identifying and addressing group problems by using what you have learned in this module about strategies and tactics.

118

BE A HIRED HAND

(25-35 min)

You are a consultant hired by your planning group to help with a problem, such as overcoming a legal restriction of the school board or getting good media exposure.

Pick a real problem that your planning group has to solve. Answer the following questions. When you have finished, share your ideas with others in the group.

1. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PROBLEM?

2. SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK TO DEFINE THE PROBLEM FURTHER ARE:

   - What does the group want?
   - What environmental response is it getting?
   - What can't the group get around?
   - How can the group informally find out the rules?
   - What does the group have to do to get what it wants?

   WHAT OTHER QUESTIONS MIGHT YOU ASK? ANSWER THEM BRIEFLY.

3. WHO HAS WHAT YOU WANT OR CAN HELP YOU GET IT?

(Please turn the page.)

EXERCISE 13

4. WHO CAN PREVENT YOU FROM GETTING WHAT YOU WANT?

5. WHAT OPTIONS EXIST FOR THE GROUP?

6. WHAT ARE THEIR CONSEQUENCES IF CARRIED OUT?

7. WHICH ACTIONS ARE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GROUP?

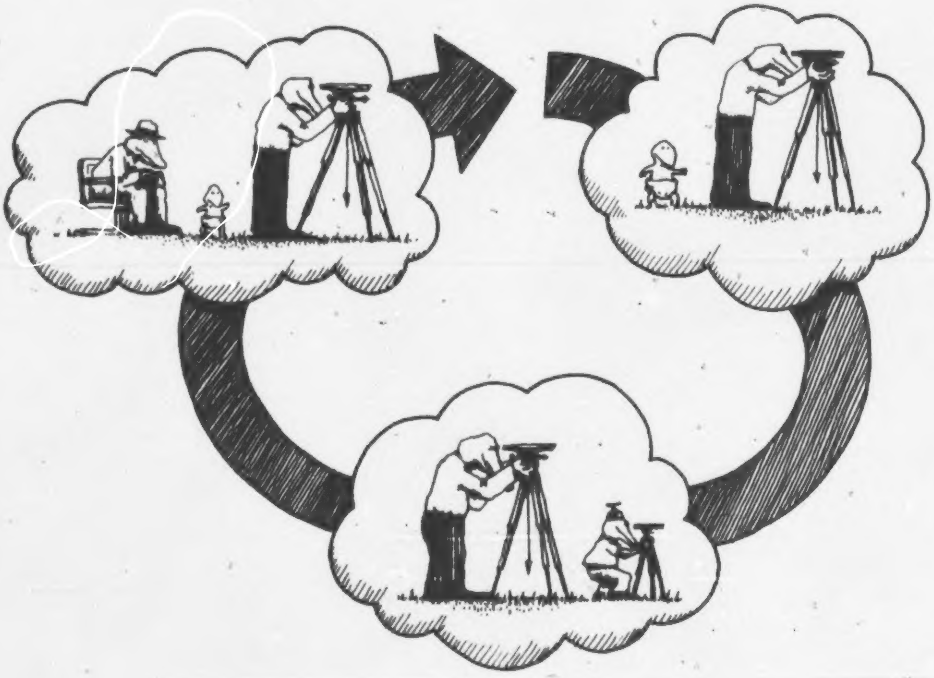
8. ON WHAT BASIS SHOULD YOU SELECT COURSE(S) OF ACTION?

9. WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND AS A PLAN FOR PUTTING THE SELECTION INTO ACTION?

10. IS THERE ANY ADVICE THAT YOU WOULD GIVE THE GROUP BEFORE THEY PUT THE PLAN INTO ACTION?

Conclusion

The Mapping Cycle



CONCLUSION: THE MAPPING CYCLE

It must be clear by now that dealing with the environment requires considerable movement and changeability. Not one strategy will work for every encounter needed with the environment.

You may very well find yourself using all of the four strategies presented in Module 4 during the same time period.

You could have one member of your group using one strategy while you are trying a different one with another powerholder.

Each strategy works better in some instances than does any of the others. And, some people are more adept with particular strategies. For these reasons it is impossible to identify the best strategy.

• A RULE OF THUMB.

You should devote considerable energy to the art of coopting people and organizations into your vision of the new school. It's hard to argue with a broad base of support in the bureaucracy, where there are many favors to be gained, and in the larger community, where the voices of hundreds can drown out any attempt to close down your school.

• A SECOND RULE OF THUMB.

Circumvention of rules and regulations can save you a lot of time and hassling. It is a low-energy strategy. But be careful to check out the absolutely necessary rules to obey and then note those others that can be bent to suit your needs.

Using any of the strategies requires intimate knowledge of who and what you're dealing with. That's a given. Your ability to "turn on a dime," to change your strategy as soon as you see that it's not working or something new has come along to foul it up depends absolutely upon your sensitivity to your environment.

Adaptiveness is the key aspect of changing and continuing strategies.

• CONCLUSION.

There is no "conclusion" to the work of mapping your environment and acting on it. It is a process that continues on, changing its form and focus, its strategies and tactics, its pace and intensity.

Your job is managing the process, rather than approaching it helter skelter, or hit and miss.

What you want to get and what others want to get is the setting in which something happens. Knowing what you want at least gets you onto the playing field. Doing something, taking action, gets you into the game. Continuing to take action keeps you in the game.

Total success is rare; don't be disappointed. You'll have to bend and compromise and put new strategies into operation. Working toward what you want also means working with what happens in the setting that you create with others.

Managing the mapping and action process requires that you:

- Create the conditions in which people will work or "deal" with each other.
- Maintain the conditions that seem to be productive.
- Modify conditions when outside reality runs head-on into them.

Four summary pointers from these modules stress the importance of your role in working with your environment:

☞ COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS IS YOUR STRENGTH.

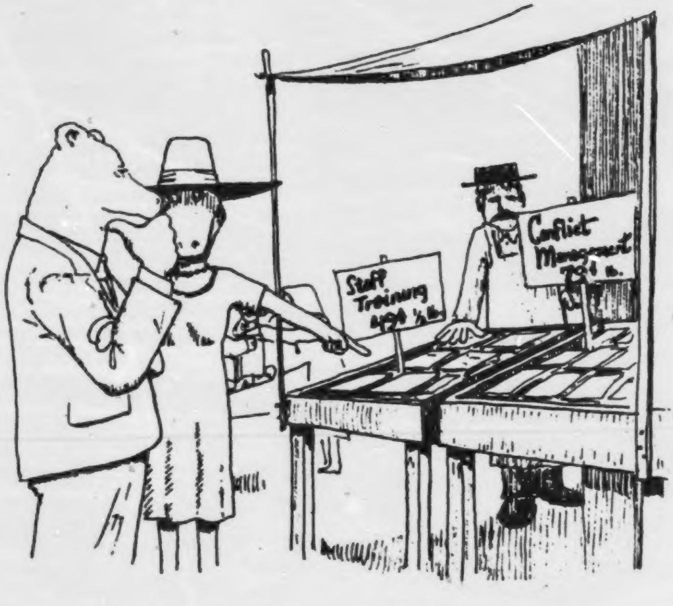
☞ BEING PROACTIVE CAN GET YOU WHAT YOU WANT.

☞ THINKING BEFORE YOU ACT CAN SAVE YOU LATER.

☞ USE ENVIRONMENTAL FEEDBACK TO PLAN YOUR NEXT STEPS.

Good luck!

Resources


Staff Training 49¢ ½ lb.
Conflict Management 73¢ lb.

RESOURCES

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